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CONTENTS

Essays

Carol A. Nathanson,
Anne Estelle Rice and "Ellen Adams Wrynn": Dreiser's Perspectives on Gender and Gendered Perspectives on Art.....3

David T. Humphries,
"The Shock of Sympathy": Bob Ames's Reading and Re-reading of Sister Carrie.....36

Stanislav Kolář,
The Czech Reception of *Sister Carrie* 56

Reviews

Sister Carrie, by Theodore Dreiser. Introduction by Richard Lingeman
An American Tragedy, by Theodore Dreiser. Introduction by Richard Lingeman
Reviewed by Lawrence E. Hussman 64

News & Notes 66

Contributors.....68

Anne Estelle Rice and "Ellen Adams Wrynn": Dreiser's Perspectives on Gender and Gendered Perspectives on Art

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In 1915, Theodore Dreiser received into his keeping twenty-two oil paintings by the expatriate modernist Anne Estelle Rice (1877-1959). Although the arrangement was intended to be temporary, Rice never retrieved her paintings. The tragic implications of an artist's abandoning her own work, suggesting abandonment of part of the self and its aspirations, presented an inviting premise for a story. From Dreiser's perspective there was additional appeal, since the paintings involved were works he genuinely admired and the artist had not only led a romantic life in Paris, which he had witnessed at first hand, but had experienced a dramatic downward shift in professional fortunes. Dreiser eventually drew upon his first-hand knowledge of Rice's life and career in crafting "Ellen Adams Wrynn," one of the portraits presented in his collection *A Gallery of Women* (1929). He began outlining the book's sketches in 1919 and by 1923 had substantially completed the writing (Swanberg 244, 271). "Ellen Adams Wrynn" was written or at least completed closer to the publication date, since the story indicates the protagonist's paintings had been left with the narrator almost fifteen years earlier.

Comparison of the facts of Rice's life, character, and career with Dreiser's treatment of them in "Ellen Adams Wrynn" reveals he took significant liberties with his source material. In particular, Wrynn, Rice's counterpart, becomes less independent, ambitious, and committed to her work than the real-life model. Wrynn's devotion to professional life is contingent upon personal happiness deriving from romantic fulfillment, her career's decline, and her own abandonment of paintings reflecting loss of that emotional state. Dreiser's modifications seem partly prompted by his instincts as a writer, for they clearly

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make for a more compelling story. They also, however, serve to express his strongly held beliefs about women, including the woman careerist and the significance of relationships in their lives. On a more personal level, Wrynn's suffering romantic reverses may have allowed Dreiser, a notorious womanizer, to revenge himself upon Rice, a woman he found extremely attractive but who was involved in other relationships and appears not to have been romantically interested in him.

Writing "Ellen Adams Wrynn" also afforded Dreiser an opportunity to sort out his responses to progressive tendencies in art. As a free-lance journalist and editor Dreiser had developed considerable familiarity with art, producing articles on the subject and developing a personal acquaintance with artists. Long a champion of social realism in art, in 1912 he had found himself greatly attracted to Rice's more abstract way of working. Statements in this story and in his other work suggest he read the styles' differences partly in gendered terms, a natural extension of his preoccupation with issues revolving around sexuality.

It is helpful here to review the major developments in "Ellen Adams Wrynn" and the themes they establish. At the story's outset its narrator, a magazine editor as Dreiser himself had been, meets the lively and attractive Ellen at an interview for an illustration assignment. On seeing her painted work, he finds it highly proficient, although noting it fails to say anything new. He also senses in it a repressed eroticism, a quality he perceives in the artist herself. It is the first of several instances in which artist and work become identified with each other in a way that goes beyond the expected reflection of creator in the object created to border on a conflation of the two.

Through subsequent meetings with the artist and others' reports, the narrator follows her career and her quest to achieve satisfaction in life—a quest that provides a major theme in Dreiser's writing. Marriage to the handsome Walter Wrynn, prompted by sexual attraction and the appeal of wealth and social position to someone of Ellen's working-class origins (Dreiser here inscribes his own background and longings, rather than those of the middle-class Rice), eventually proves unsatisfying. Ellen divorces, gives up her child, and returns to painting, her first love. She also takes up with Jimmie Race, an effete, intellectual painter whose seriousness about art she admires. Wrynn soon diverts their relationship from a romantic track to a purely collegial one, and together the two travel to Paris, where Wrynn meets her true soul mate in the person of Scottish artist Keir McKail. A more avant-garde painter than Race, McKail is also more confident and forceful—thus more compatible with the vital Wrynn. This new relationship,

which Ellen allows McKail to dominate, brings fulfillment, and that in turn provides a basis for reaching heights of accomplishment in her art, now more abstract. On seeing murals Wrynn has sent back from France, the narrator marvels at the new authority of her work. Traveling abroad, he encounters additional examples of her art and has the opportunity to observe Wrynn's and McKail's interactions.

McKail eventually abandons Wrynn for another woman, the narrator discovering the extent to which this has affected Wrynn when she visits New York. Arriving with much of her production, Wrynn is intent on holding a major exhibition, a project in which she has enlisted the narrator's help. Here Dreiser reveals his discomfort with ambition in a woman, a quality at odds with what he construes as the truly feminine personality. His narrator has been rather taken aback at Ellen's "smartly" businesslike inquiries about opportunities in New York (166), and one reads disapproval as well in subsequent descriptions of her brisk, industrious, and calculated campaign to pursue her aims after her arrival (171, 173). Ellen's ambitiousness—however much her talents merit recognition—is presented as evidence of a woman changed for the worse. Yet Dreiser, who had often in his own career faced obstacles that cast him into despair, could not help but sympathetically describe Wrynn's frustration at "artistically . . . not as yet [having] achieved that secure position which from the beginning had been her dream" (172).

Wrynn's considerable difficulties in realizing her aims, the narrator tells us, could be overcome by persistence, given her substantial accomplishments as an artist. Wrynn, however, is unequipped to persist because of a fundamental problem: post-McKail life—including remarriage to a man lacking McKail's strengths—has left her restless and dissatisfied. Her unhappiness is also reflected in her more recent work, which the narrator finds "not nearly as good—neither so colorful nor so spirited" as the paintings done earlier in Paris (170). Soon the depressed Ellen gives herself over to running with a bohemian crowd, drinking heavily, and seeking to meet a variety of men. Remarking her indifference to her absent husband, a British critic named Sherard Netherby, the narrator conjectures that Wrynn is engaged in a desperate search for "some one man of force or distinction, or both, in the walk of the arts who could again enchant her" (174). Eventually Wrynn departs America, leaving her paintings behind, her failure to reclaim them as the years pass a witness to her ongoing apathy. A friend of hers tells the narrator, "The truth is that art was just a door to happiness for Ellen. She could always paint. She can now, better than ever if she only wanted to. But she won't. Her sole aim is to achieve happiness. And the only way she can do that is to paint for some one

she loves" (177).

Dreiser met the model for Wrynn, Anne Estelle Rice (Fig. 1), during a trip to Europe he made in 1911-12**.** His travels were intended to gather background information for the experiences abroad of Frank Cowperwood, protagonist of a trilogy of novels based on the life of American business mogul Charles Yerkes. The first book, *The Financier*, was then in progress. To help offset the trip's expenses, Dreiser also committed to recording impressions of European cities for a series of articles and possible book, the latter published in 1913 under the title *A Traveler at Forty*. Dreiser's trip was orchestrated by British publisher Grant Richards, an individual with considerable interest in contemporary art. It was Richards who introduced Dreiser to Rice and Scottish painter John Duncan Fergusson (the inspiration for Keir McKail). Fergusson (1874-1961), leader of an Anglo-American modernist circle, had met Rice in 1907 and encouraged the Philadelphia-trained illustrator to direct her attention to painting. The two developed a romantic relationship lasting six years. After meeting Dreiser, Rice sent him a note, one quintessentially hers in its confidence and breezy humor. She invites him to dine with her and Fergusson at her studio, "if you think you can risk the cooking by a lady artist." The message continues: "We can perhaps put you on to some things, without I hope interfering with the impressions of a 'tenderfoot.' " Always an independent sort, Rice suddenly drops the "we" to advise Dreiser, "I can then explain about *these places* of amusement" (Rice to Dreiser, Jan. 14, 1912, emphasis hers).[1] What she means by "these places" is indicated in *A Traveler at Forty*, in which Rice and Fergusson, identified as "Miss N." and "Mr. McG.," invite Dreiser to accompany them to several of their Left Bank haunts. Dreiser also visits their studios, where he notes "scores of canvases done in the neo-impressionistic style which interested me profoundly" (232-34).[2]

In the years following this trip, Dreiser would have ample reminders of that independence, as well as of Rice's ambition and strong commitment to work. These qualities, however, do not figure in "Ellen Adams Wrynn" as essential or primary. It is revealing to note what struck Dreiser about Rice at their initial meeting, as recorded in *A Traveler at Forty*. He dwells on Rice's attractive appearance and on the kind of personality traits he valued in women. "Miss N." is described as "a delightfully Parisianized American, without the slightest affectation . . . of either speech or manner," a "pleasingly good-looking [woman] with . . . a healthy, rounded face and figure, and a cheerful, good-natured air."[3] Significantly, he emphasizes her low-key attitude toward her professional identity, observing: "There was no sense of either that aggressiveness or superiority which so often characterizes

1. Photograph of Anne Estelle Rice, c. 1908. (Collection of the artist's family, London.)

the female artist" (233). Lawrence Hussman, in exploring Dreiser's concept of female perfection as reflected in *The "Genius,"* a novel largely completed at the time of his trip, notes that Dreiser tempers his ideal woman's creativity and intellectual abilities by a giving, sympathetic nature and, in any case, never represents her as the hero's intellectual equal (95-96, 100).

The low-key attitude Rice displayed regarding her art in that initial meeting with Dreiser had little basis in feminine modesty or a sense that work was not what she was primarily about, as his comments might imply. What we know of her personality suggests he was

responding to her good manners and, more importantly, to a confidence arising from substantial career accomplishments. Rice had arrived in Paris as an established illustrator, her work (including several cover designs) having appeared in some of the major publications for which Dreiser himself had written: *McClure's*, *Metropolitan Magazine,* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. On taking up painting, Rice exhibited at the progressive *Salon d'Automne* and *Salon des Indépendants*. Elected a *Salon d'Automne Sociétaire* in 1910, she served on that salon's jury two years later. She also became a primary illustrator for the British "little magazine" *Rhythm*. Its first number (summer 1911) featured an article by one of its founding editors which paid homage to Rice, whose successful solo exhibition at London's Baillie Gallery had recently closed. Since 1909 the artist had also been working on a major mural commission for Philadelphia's Wanamaker Store. Seeing her panels for this commission in Paris, Dreiser was struck by the raw, non-naturalistic colors, as well as by the compositions' strongly articulated shapes. He applauded Rice's pursuit of new avenues of aesthetic and personal expression, observing, "[i]t is so hard to break tradition" (*Traveler* 235).

Viewing Rice's and Fergusson's art in their ateliers gave it the kind of immediacy, the life-connection Dreiser relished. In *A Traveler at Forty*, he declares that seeing modern art in a gallery or hearing it argued about in a social setting cannot compare with "com[ing] upon it fresh from the easel in the studio of the artist, or still in process of production, defended by every thought and principle of which the artist is capable" (234-35). In "Ellen Adams Wrynn" he re-presents that vivid experience when Wrynn in her Paris studio expounds on Matisse's significance and the differences between Matisse's and Picasso's uses of abstraction—Matisse exploiting it to enhance subject matter, Picasso valuing it for its own sake (155-56). The fictional episode suggests Rice's importance in instructing Dreiser, not only through the example of her work but through her discourse on art theory as well. Questioning Dreiser about his model for Wrynn, his biographer Dorothy Dudley learned the individual was someone "who, on his first trip to Europe in 1912 not only cured the Hoosier of Bouguereau but unintentionally, it seems, made him discover his own relation to other moderns, whether writers or painters . . . " (467). Although Dreiser had actually come to despise the Bouguereau school of classical painting much earlier in embracing urban realism in art, his comments to Dudley underscore Rice's significance in his grasping more current, formalist tendencies.[4]

Despite Rice's contributions to his aesthetic education, Dreiser was most interested in the gendered aspects of what she and Fergusson

represented, both in themselves and in their work. After noting in *A Traveler at Forty* that "Mr. McG.'s" paintings resembled "Miss N.'s," Dreiser offers a comparison of the two artists in which production and gender-related personality traits become confusingly intertwined. He begins with a comment recalling a previous observation about how "solid" and "self-reliant" Fergusson seemed (233)—"Of the two painters, the man seemed to me the more forceful"—and then follows with the comment that "Miss N. worked in a softer mood, with more of what might be called an emotional attitude towards life" (235). In constructing this odd comparison, Dreiser manages to ignore his just-expressed enthusiasm for the raw power of Rice's murals.

In "Ellen Adams Wrynn," Dreiser presents McKail and Wrynn as two opposed personalities clearly based on gender stereotypes: the forceful, intellectual, and independent male versus the softer, emotion-driven, and—a significant addition to the *Traveler* description—dependent female. Having lived with Rice's canvases for years, Dreiser could not, however, disregard their qualities as easily as he had earlier. He represents the forcefulness of Wrynn's work as a kind of mystery, irreconcilable with her personality, her feminine essence. "For how came this unity of something extremely feminine with these quite powerful and almost gross canvases on her walls?" he asks wonderingly (162) and observes: "I studied her as much as I did her work, but without the ability to connect the two. McKail and herself I could connect easily, since apart from art they were so essentially masculine and feminine" (163).

For Dreiser, who had a near-obsession with sexuality and in particular sexual attraction, issues of gender tended to revolve around qualities which drew men and women to each other. In the case of Rice and Fergusson, this interest was reinforced by his first meeting with them in a city he had determined to be a sexually charged site. He identifies sex as the leitmotif of the scenes enacted in Parisian cafés, restaurants, and places of entertainment, marveling at the "magnetism of sex which is capitalized and used in Paris as it is nowhere else in the world" (*Traveler* 220-21). For Dreiser, who viewed cities in anthropomorphic terms, sexuality was part of the essence of Paris, part of its living character.[5] Importantly, Dreiser's first encounter with Rice and Fergusson occurred immediately following the initiation into Paris nightlife that had produced such vivid impressions of the city's sexual atmosphere.

That September, when Dreiser was back in the States, Rice acted to maintain the acquaintance by dropping him an amusing note on a postcard. He apparently responded with a letter and clippings (probably reviews of *The Financier*, published in the fall of 1912),[6] for

Rice refers to them in a letter of May 10, 1913, congratulating him on his successful career. The pragmatic Rice appreciated that a New York author with his star on the rise was well-positioned to assist in a plan she had been contemplating: to visit the city in early 1914 and hold her first American exhibition. The May 10 letter describes her project dynamically as "a plan I've got to storm America with a show of mine" and a "*coup d'état*." Requesting Dreiser's help, Rice indicates her preferred type of gallery and financial arrangements and asks whether he can introduce her to critics who might publicize the show. She mentions having timed the trip to coincide with the last of the murals' arrival at Wanamaker's and to capitalize on the intense interest in modernism generated by the Armory Show, held in New York earlier that year. Reviewing her professional credentials, including the central Wanamaker panel's recent reproduction in *The International Studio*, a well-known art magazine, she declares, "If it is necessary to convince a dealer that I'm a bona-fide genius, I can send any number of newspaper notices to prove my reputation in France and England."

Dreiser not having responded, Rice sent a repeat request on August 31 in which she emphasized their collegial relationship: "This is really a great favor I'm asking, but I trust I shall have the pleasure of rendering you a service sometime." In closing, she tells him her letter comes from Cassis "by the beautiful Côte d'Azur, where the sun shines eternally, where the artist's vision has a chance to expand, where glorious design, color, volume and line obviously exist," adding regards from herself and Fergusson, who was there with her. Dreiser drew upon this letter for his Wrynn portrait, modifying its contents and presenting them in a very different context. Wrynn's letter inquiring about possibilities in America mentions being "a little fed up on Paris" and ends with a terse reference to McKail's being in the south of France (166). Unbeknownst to Ellen, the narrator is aware of McKail's having abandoned her nearly a year before. Dreiser thus links Wrynn's interest in advancing her career with McKail's absence from her life, the American trip further appealing as an opportunity to remove herself from the scene of her affair. No such connections existed in Rice's case.

Certainly the end of Rice's long relationship with Fergusson was a tremendous blow for her. Sometime between early and mid-September, Fergusson revealed to Rice he had fallen in love with British interpretive dancer and teacher Margaret Morris (in the fictional parallel, McKail leaves Wrynn for Polish dancer Kina Maxa), whom he invited to join him in the south, where he would be staying. Rice's letters of October to O. Raymond Drey (1885-1977), a young art and drama critic from Manchester whom she would soon marry, mention

having gone through a debilitating emotional and physical experience, one which remains unspecified.[7] In any case, Rice soldiered on, managing to maintain a cordial relationship with Fergusson and Morris (including cataloguing and arranging storage of Fergusson's work, which was no small task) and throwing herself into completing the Wanamaker murals.

During this troubled time, Drey provided crucial support. The two had met the year before, during a trip Drey made to Paris to educate himself about modern art. Although involved with Fergusson, Rice had been flattered by Drey's ardent courtship. Buoyed by his constancy after Fergusson's defection, she accepted his marriage proposal, though admitting she had not imagined herself getting married and telling him frankly she was not passionately in love with him. Although, like Dreiser, Rice believed relationships should be intense for both parties involved, she appreciated that intensity existed at least on Drey's side. More important, as October and November letters to Drey reveal, Rice—thinking in professional terms—had embraced the idea of a marriage of kindred spirits who could stimulate and support each other in their endeavors. Her post-marriage correspondence with Drey up to the birth of their son David in 1919 indicates that her feelings for him evolved over time from a warm affection to genuine love.

On November 12, Dreiser, ignorant of Fergusson's departure and the engagement to Drey, finally responded to Rice's request, providing detailed information about New York exhibition spaces (all with some disadvantage in terms of cost, schedule, location or layout) and possibilities for renting a loft.[8] Despite her upcoming marriage and growing certainty a trip in early 1914 was not feasible, Rice wrote Dreiser on November 30, 1913, to tell him that regardless of the difficulties he had outlined she intended to pursue her plan. Her silence about her engagement seems to have reflected concern marriage would cause her to be taken less seriously as an artist. In one letter she urges Drey to keep their engagement quiet because of its potential to affect her professionally should she travel to America (Rice to Drey, [Oct. 24, 1913]).[9] In another, she comments that her friends will imagine that "by marrying I shall cease to be an artist" (Rice to Drey, [Dec. 14, 1913]). Rice eventually did cancel the New York venture because pushing to complete the murals, planning for the wedding, and setting up a household in England exhausted her and used up time needed for making trip arrangements.

In her November 30 letter to Dreiser, Rice had stated she was looking forward to seeing him in New York. One can imagine his surprise when in early January 1914 he received an announcement of her wedding to Drey on December 27 and of her new address in England.

Unaware of the circumstances, Dreiser jotted on the notice, "She deserted Fergusson apparently & married this man." A letter Rice had written on its reverse began with an intriguing comment: "I don't know whether to apologise for myself or boast of this deed. Perhaps it's better to say little about it." Informing Dreiser she was postponing the trip indefinitely, she described her new husband as a critic formerly affiliated with *Rhythm* and someone who "shares all my artistic interests, as well as my point of view of life."[10] Anxious to assure him of her continued involvement in art, she mentions she is "building a studio in Disley" (a plan never carried out, for the couple soon left the Manchester area for London) "and shall continue to 'prostitute' painting with greater vigor than ever" (Rice to Dreiser, Jan. 3, 1914).

By marrying, Rice did diminish herself in Dreiser's eyes. He had clearly found her informal relationship with Fergusson tremendously appealing, for when his narrator in "Ellen Adams Wrynn" learns of Wrynn's marriage, he regretfully recalls "the two bright studios . . . the differing canvases, the happy-go-lucky arrangements for now a breakfast in the one place, a dinner in the other . . ." (168). The narrator wonders not only at Wrynn's choice of husband but "why marriage at all" (171). *A Traveler at Forty* in fact contains a diatribe against marriage, Dreiser railing against societal pressures that bind individuals no longer compatible (498-99), a situation he knew at first-hand from his own marriage. Dreiser recognized, too, the conflict of interest marriage represented for the talented woman pursuing a career. In *The "Genius,"* Christina Channing, who hopes to achieve success as an opera singer, observes that for the woman performer marriage can be "a mistake. Most of the singers I know don't do so very well tied down by marriage" (154).

By late 1914, the war having made Rice's and Drey's financial situation extremely precarious, Rice revived her plans for a major New York exhibition. Ignoring Drey's concerns about wartime travel and her pregnancy, she wrote Dreiser, "Again my face is turned toward America but this time with the grim determination to get there, and to arrive about November 10th" (Rice to Dreiser, Oct. 2 [1914]). The decision had been precipitous, Rice not even allowing Dreiser time to reply before setting sail. Asking him to advertise her presence among friends who might be interested in her work, she also attempted to enlist help for Drey, indicating he might join her if an opening for an art or theater critic were available (Rice to Dreiser, Oct. 2 [1914]).

Rice's letters to Drey from New York reflect her enthusiasm at again giving undivided attention to her career and her great optimism, at least initially, about a positive outcome—attitudes Dreiser could not help but observe from his contacts with her yet did not reflect in his

Wrynn portrait. Rice delighted in finding a studio as spacious as her old one in Paris (in his story Dreiser uses the same location, above Healey's restaurant) and in painting it in vibrant Fauve colors to complement her works and attract attention (Rice to Drey, Dec. 15, 1914). Time not spent pursuing galleries, collectors, and press publicity or in scouting possibilities for Drey she often passed in the company of a close friend, miniature painter Myra Edgerly Burt. Burt, too, was struggling to maintain a career, and Rice's correspondence tells of their efforts to keep each other's spirits up. The letters to Drey are affectionate and teasing. Not being in love with him had, in fact, become something of joke between them. In one she writes, "I believe if I am separated from you for some time there will be some danger of my falling in love with you. *Quelle Tragedie*!" (Rice to Drey, Dec. 1, 1914).

Rice would have avoided discussing her feelings about Drey with Dreiser and would likely have said little at all about him. She had learned to compartmentalize her involvements, in part from maintaining ties with a family disapproving of her career and life choices. Furthermore, Rice's efficient, pragmatic nature led her to approach matters in a highly focused way, and in the context of this trip (as her letters reveal), she associated Dreiser with business. Most significant, her concerns about marriage's impact on her professional image would have made her resist urges to be expansive about her married life. This silence left Dreiser free to draw his own conclusions about the relationship and allowed him subsequently to exploit her reticence in his story, where Wrynn's general lack of comment about her husband indicates her indifference to him.

Dreiser invited Rice to at least one social gathering at his apartment to meet people who might be useful to her (Rice to Drey, [Nov. 27, 1914]) , but he apparently provided fewer press and magazine contacts than some of her other acquaintances and consequently came in for a lambasting in her letters, along with others who disappointed her. "Theodore Dreiser," she wrote Drey in January, "is absolutely no good. He has fallen in with a lot of cheap theatrical people." And later that month: "The man Dreiser is an ass not to have helped me" (Rice to Drey, Jan. 5, 26, 1915).[11]

Rice had been growing increasingly alarmed at the trip's lack of concrete results, given her expenses, which included having to rent the studio for a year. Although major dealers and collectors admired her work, their interest led to no significant outcome. Beyond the problems connected with lack of planning, Rice found that prospects of America's entering the war had adversely affected art sales and dealers' willingness to consider exhibitions on any basis but guaranteed profit. She also discovered her prices were too high for bargain-

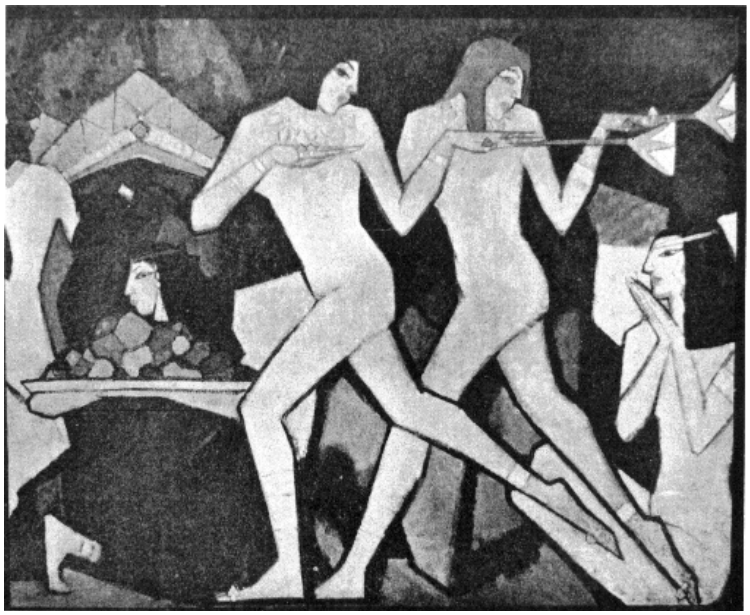
seeking collectors (Rice to Drey, Jan. 29, 1915; Feb. 9, 26, 1915). Rice must have discussed these difficulties with Dreiser, for Wrynn's complaints to the narrator run along similar lines. Rice's efforts to persevere assume heroic dimensions, for, about a month into her stay, she suffered a miscarriage and spent over three weeks recovering. This situation gave the lonely Drey further reason to request she return. Rice, urging him not to be sad and impatient, insisted she had to stay on, since he could not afford to give her a studio and she could not "live without painting" (Rice to Drey, Feb. 5, [1915]), her position a far cry from Wrynn's more qualified commitment to professional life.

Pursuing leads to the very end (unlike Wrynn) but accepting that she would not have an American exhibition at this time, Rice departed for England in early March. Before sailing, she arranged for many of the paintings to remain in New York with two individuals who would promote the work. Horace Holley, a friend and former dealer from Paris days, took sixty-six oils, while gallery owner Charles Daniel took seven. (Wrynn's paintings, in contrast, are left with the narrator and an illustrator friend.) It was financially impossible for Rice to bring back all the work, but more importantly she was encouraged about exhibiting the following year in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. She had decided, too, to secure another Wanamaker commission and was bent on finding an inexpensive studio back home. "And dearest," she wrote Drey, "I'm mad to paint again." She was delighted with some work just completed that indicated her art was moving in new directions (Rice to Drey, [Feb. 12, 1915]). Rice's natural optimism having reasserted itself, her own departure, unlike Wrynn's, did not occur in complete defeat and depression.

On October 1, Holley, who was moving to smaller quarters, transferred twenty-two of Rice's paintings to Dreiser. In asking Dreiser to take these works, Rice declared herself "in a fearful state concerning my paintings." Hoping to cajole him into becoming their custodian, she continued, "Do have them *chez vous*! I'm sure you would find them good company and quite harmless placed against a wall." Unable to resist some professional needling, she added, "What a terrible '*métier*' painting is, especially modern painting, it [requires] such help. Why was I not a writer—a pot of ink and the brain's energy condensed in a few reams of paper" (Rice to Dreiser, Aug. 24, 1915).

Following the works' transfer, Rice expressed her "great relief to know that these artistic infants have found a shelter." With the war continuing and the Dreys' finances unimproved, she anticipated not being able to retrieve the paintings in the immediate future. "God knows when I shall see them again," she wrote, "so perhaps they will have to stay with you a long time, and you wouldn't[,] you couldn't,

put them on the curb?" Playing to Dreiser's abhorrence of conservatism, she added, "You 'darsn't' any way expose them to public view. The public would find them obscene" (Rice to Dreiser, Oct. 20, 1915). Rice had, in fact, had her own brushes with conservatives. Her *Egyptian Dancers,* a work in Dreiser's keeping (Fig. 2), had been spat upon at the 1910 *Salon d'Automne*, while one of her submissions to the 1913 "Post-Impressionists and Futurists" exhibition in London had been refused, apparently because of subject. "[I]ndecent no doubt," she had written Drey, "although a blind man could have seen its purity" (Rice to Drey, Oct. 20, 1913). Its subject was likely one of the romantic nude or semi-nude female figures she depicted frequently between 1910 and 1912. Monumental, sensuous women, they exude a supreme confidence.



2. Anne Estelle Rice, *The Egyptian Dancers (Two Egyptian Dancers),* 1910, oil on canvas, 57 x 73 inches. Location unknown. (Reproduced in Holbrook Jackson, "Personal Expression in Paint: The Work of Estelle Rice," *Black & White*, March 11, 1911: 341.)

Dreiser was clearly attracted to the eroticism of these images and would have found in them support for associating Rice with a life of the senses and emotions. A 1923 photograph, taken in his St. Luke's Place studio (Fig. 3), shows the writer lounging casually near two of

3. Detail of a photograph of Theodore Dreiser in his St. Luke's Place studio apartment, Greenwich Village, with Rice's paintings *Nicoline* (left) and *La Négresse* (right), both 1910-11, on the walls. Photographer: Paul Thompson, 1923. (Theodore Dreiser Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania.)

these paintings, *Nicoline* and *La Négresse*. The subject of the first painting (Fig. 4) is a contemporary nature goddess, her robe parted to reveal a bare torso. The second work depicts a light-skinned woman of color whose dress, slipping from one shoulder, emphasizes the upper contours of her heavy breasts.[12] Dreiser's confident pose and proximity to these paintings convey ownership of the works—and, by ex-

tension, of the nearly life-size women represented in them. In fact, the two oils, along with less visible works in the background which one assumes to be of similar subjects, produce the impression of a pictorial harem. Significantly, the *Arabian Nights*, with its evocation of erotic harem life, had fascinated Dreiser as a boy, its influence occasionally surfacing in his writings (Griffin, *Small Canvas* 129-30). The appeal of possessing a bevy of women is apparent in Dreiser's choice of *A Gallery of Women* as the title for his collection of sketches in contrast to the more neutral *Twelve Men*, the title of his previously published collection.[13]

In a letter of August 1917,[14] Rice inquired after her paintings, asking, "How are my artistic children behaving?" and adding, "Growing up and getting mellow I suppose." Her metaphorical references to paintings as children here and in the letter of the previous October were obviously intended to amuse Dreiser and remind him of the works' importance to her; however, they may also have had a more literal significance. From the time of her engagement, Rice had been eager to have a child; now at age forty and after multiple miscarriages, she faced the possibility paintings would remain her only offspring. Wrynn's inquiries after her paintings, in contrast, seem more perfunctory and appear in letters witnessing her restless changes of location in search of happiness. These moves include a return to Paris after leav-

4. *Nicoline*, c. 1910-11, oil on canvas, 36 x 29 inches. Location unknown. Reproduced as "Study" in Huntly Carter, *The New Spirit in Drama and Art* (London: F. Palmer, 1912), opposite p. 45.

ing Netherby, a development with no parallel in the life of Rice, who remained married to Drey and living in England. In formulating his story, Dreiser appears to have worked backwards from the fact of Rice's failure to reclaim her paintings, fictionalizing where required in order to explain that failure in the context of his beliefs about relationships.

Not surprisingly, Rice's wartime letters to Dreiser include relatively little mention of art activity, although she managed painting holidays in various locations in England, including a 1918 stay in Cornwall with writer Katherine Mansfield, a close friend from Paris days. Curiously, Rice chose not to mention several notable accomplishments of the war years, including an illustration commission for *Bay* (1919), a book of poems by D. H. Lawrence published by Cyril Beaumont's private press.[15] Conscious of the contrast with her earlier level of activity, she must have been reluctant to overemphasize the more occasional achievement, especially to someone who had known her in Paris and had also witnessed her failed efforts in New York. Rice probably envisioned an improved situation after the war, affording more in the way of professional news to communicate. Nevertheless, her silence regarding the Lawrence commission remains odd, since in a 1916 letter she mentions the suppression of *The Rainbow* and describes Lawrence as a friend of Drey's and hers. The same letter contains enthusiastic comments about Joseph Conrad and several other authors (Rice to Dreiser, June 30). Rice's observations reflect a genuine pleasure in reading fiction, as well as interest in engaging in collegial discourse revolving around issues of creativity, iconoclasm, and censorship.

Rice's last letter to Dreiser, written in late 1920, arrived after a long lapse in communication on both sides. Its retrospective view and comments suggestive of depression (partly occasioned by a close friend's death[16]) and resignation must have figured importantly in Dreiser's account of Wrynn's lost appetite for life and career. Rice observes she "seem[s] to have taken root in England" despite ongoing dislike of its weather (which often frustrated her attempts to work outdoors). She tells him that although the London art scene is slowly recovering from the war "it never had the vitality that Paris gives," attributing this lack in part to "too many cliques—absorbed in petty gossip and jealousy" (Rice to Dreiser, Dec. 12, 1914). Her views here reflect her experiences with the powerful Bloomsbury set, who harbored an intense dislike for most of the former *Rhythm* associates.[17]

Earlier in the letter, Rice mentions her young son David in a manner recalling her previous references to her artworks as children. She writes, "I've got a lovely boy—nearly 2 yrs. old. The best thing

I've ever done." She follows up this news with mention of the paintings left in Dreiser's care: "I don't know when I'm coming to America and therefore I don't know what to say about my paintings in your keeping. Please do take care of them for me." Juxtaposed, the two comments suggest motherhood had replaced work as her chief concern. They would also have negated or rendered defensive her statement near the letter's close that "[i]n spite of a happy marriage my work interests me just as much as ever—and I think I am more keen" (Rice to Dreiser, Dec. 12, 1920). Rice's letter does, in fact, reflect the beginnings of her coming to terms with the unlikelihood of regaining her Paris reputation and shows her willingness to seek more widely for fulfillment. Although she occasionally exhibited in the years following World War I, increasingly she drew and painted for her own satisfaction.

There are a number of possible explanations for Rice's failure to retrieve the paintings left in New York. Financial considerations would have played a major role immediately following World War I, when the Dreys lacked the means to bring back the works, the same situation existing during the Depression years. Furthermore, as Rice began practicing a more linear, patterned way of working—a Deco-related approach lasting from the mid-teens through the mid-twenties—she may have become somewhat distanced from her pre-1915 Fauve and Cubist production. Reclaiming that earlier work would therefore have become less crucial, especially since she possessed at least some examples and additional ones existed in British private collections. The most important factor, however, must have been a psychological one: avoidance. The returned paintings would have provided a painful reminder of glory days in Paris, pointing up the contrast of everything that had ensued, beginning with the failed American venture.

Dreiser himself helped underscore that contrast in a way suggesting Rice was no longer to be regarded seriously as an artist. In early 1921, he sent a condescending reply to the letter with which Rice had re-established contact, in which she ruminated on professional difficulties and voiced general depression, while at the same time expressing pride in her child. Writing from California, he tells her:

> I have often thought of you and wondered what you were doing with your creative impulse. You always seemed so dynamic to me that I fancied you would need to be doing something if no more than worrying. If you have taken to repopulating the earth,—well, of course, that is a large business in itself.

He lets her know the paintings are safe in his New York studio: "All the really important ones,—to my taste, that is—are hung on the walls

of said studio." He adds, "The others, a number of flower pieces for which I did not care so much," are in storage "along with other bits of un-needed furniture." Continuing in the same vein, he remarks, "One or two of these things I have enjoyed living with very much, especially a certain dancing picture" (Dreiser to Rice, Feb. 7, 1921). This tepid compliment contrasts markedly with the enthusiasm he had expressed in 1915 for *The Egyptian Dancers*, which he had described as a "lyric thing—beautiful in the very essence of the word" (Dreiser to Rice, Oct. 7, 1915). From this point, further contact with Dreiser must have become difficult for Rice, who was extremely sensitive about how she was viewed professionally—and, in fact, the Dreiser archive includes no further correspondence from her. The 1929 publication of *A Gallery of Women* would hardly have mended fences. One wonders which Rice found most offensive: the disclosures about her personal life; the fabrication of additional, largely unflattering details; or the suggestion her willingness to exercise her talents was contingent on being in love.[18]

In making Wrynn's difficulties a function of losing the great love of her life, Dreiser was in part exacting revenge for Rice's sexual inaccessibility. Supporting this interpretation are the narrator's confessions of romantic interest in Wrynn (136-38). As previously noted, Rice's appearance, personality, and creative profession represented an extremely attractive combination for Dreiser. Significantly, two of his major romantic interests of the 1910s, Thelma Cudlipp and Kirah Markham, were associated with visual art, the first as an art student, the second as an amateur artist (as well as professional actress). Yet on the two occasions offering Dreiser direct contact with Rice, her attachments to others put her beyond his reach. For her part, nothing in the substance or tone of her correspondence suggests she regarded him as more than a friend, fellow creative-spirit, and author she admired, as well as a useful professional contact. Pursuing revenge through his fiction would not have been new for Dreiser. Robert Penn Warren has suggested that the revised ending for *The "Genius,"* in which Eugene Witla ignores Suzanne Dale when he sees her on the street in later years, was Dreiser's way of paying back Thelma Cudlipp for allowing their relationship to be terminated (cited in Hussman 108). Dreiser and Cudlipp met again years later, significantly when work on *A Gallery of Women* was in its final phase. Dreiser, having commented on the length of time it had taken Thelma to read *The "Genius"* and having expressed his satisfaction at news of the suicide of her mother, who had kept them apart, moved as if to embrace her but stopped, declaring, "It is too late" (Lingeman 313).[19] Dreiser's continuing to resent Cudlipp and his likely association of Cudlipp with Rice would help

explain an important aspect of Wrynn's history having no correspondence in Rice's life: Ellen's marrying a wealthy socialite husband whom she later abandons, along with their child. On renewing his acquaintance with Cudlipp, Dreiser discovered she had married into money and position and was mother to two children (Lingeman 313).

When Wrynn, disappointed in her New York ambitions, turns to amusements and promiscuity, the narrator is not among the men with whom she distracts herself. Certainly a narrator-Wrynn relationship would have diverted attention from the central point of Wrynn's seeking another McKail; however, Dreiser may also have hesitated to claim in print, even under cover of fiction, that Rice had sought such a relationship with him. He had no such compunctions, however, about making that claim privately to Dudley, while presumably keeping Rice's identity a secret. He commented that Wrynn's inspiration "was one of those women where I lost out. She didn't want me, that is, not until years later, and then I wouldn't have her." Had she become old and unattractive by then? "No," replied Dreiser, "she was just the same. But it's a rule with me not to moon around over anyone." Then he added spitefully, "Besides I don't want a woman who has known a lot of men" (qtd. in Dudley 467). In "Ellen Adams Wrynn," Dreiser describes their relationship more accurately: the narrator mentions "being in this [romantic] mood about [Ellen], (although, as I discovered in due time, she was in no such mood in regard to me) . . ." (136). No change in Ellen's feelings is ever indicated.

Whatever personal satisfaction Dreiser took in making Rice/Wrynn a thrall to love, more importantly it allowed him to address what he considered the most significant subject in fiction. Not long after *A Gallery of Women*'s publication, he described the "man-woman theme," the issue of sexual attraction and interaction, as "the underlying theme of all great novels," observing that it was not possible to write fiction without addressing the eternal "man-woman struggle, appeal, pull, differences" (qtd. in Mookerjee 340). In Dreiser's view, achieving a fulfilling relationship was especially critical for women, an attitude reflected in his stories of women's search for success in contrast to his tales of male protagonists, in which professional concerns assume a more central role.[20] A body of feminist writing has emphasized Dreiser's lack of interest in exploring working-class women's responses to activities, issues, and peers in the workplace.[21] Indeed, Dreiser comments in *A Traveler at Forty*, "We talk much about the economic independence of women in America. It seems to me the French have solved it in the only way that it can be solved. Madame helps her husband in his business and they make a success of it together" (227). Significantly, Madame's most important contribution to

this venture is to create a well-kept, charming ambience (227-28).

Dreiser's 1890s magazine profiles of women achievers in a variety of areas, including the arts, demonstrate that he was favorably disposed toward women professionals.[22] He emphasizes many of the same personal qualities that he finds in male counterparts and often notes their accomplishments equal or surpass men's. Nevertheless, close reading of these essays again betrays his acceptance of cultural stereotypes.[23] For instance, in an extremely positive essay on women composers, he states, "In the smaller forms,—instrumental solos and short songs, material for light and comic opera . . . woman has naturally found her first success" ("Women Who Have Won Distinction in Music" 31). An article crediting women musicians and composers with reviving interest in the harp characterizes that revival as "in a sense feminine," noting the way the player's female form complements the instrument's graceful and elegant shape ("The Harp" 13). The harp, Dreiser tells us, appeals as "the voice of poetry, of sentiment" and because of "the peculiar beauty of its tone-color" ("The Harp" 11)—involvement with color, as we shall see, being a characteristic he partly associates with female proclivities.

Dreiser's views on how the eternal feminine manifests itself in visual art are expressed in an 1898 appreciation of painter Louise Cox. Like her more well-known husband, muralist Kenyon Cox, this artist created imaginary, classicizing subjects. The essay suggests that to Dreiser, by then an advocate of contemporary realism in art,[24] such themes were more palatable in a woman's work. Significantly, Kenyon Cox receives only passing mention, as someone whose fame had obscured his wife's achievements ("Work of Mrs. Kenyon Cox" 477). The familiarity Dreiser had gained with work by women illustrators through his writing for and editing popular publications would have had a bearing on his associating women's art with the imaginative. Excluded from the cadre of artist-reporters out in the field, women largely specialized in illustrating home and fashion articles or fiction and poetry with romantic, sentimental, and often imaginary themes. Not surprisingly, the illustration commission Wrynn receives from the narrator when they first meet is for "a story at once sensuous and exotic . . . concern[ing] some form of adventure and love in Egypt," for which she has been particularly recommended (133). While this assignment reflects the romantic and specifically orientalizing character of much of Rice's art (a taste, incidentally, shared by many male modernists), it also matches the general profile of women's illustration.

The Louise Cox essay reveals more than Dreiser's acceptance of imaginative subjects in the context of women's art. The strength of Cox's work, in Dreiser's view, resides largely in visual considera-

tions—that is, in a harmonious, decorative treatment of line and especially color, qualities he sees as reflecting women artists' proclivities (and limitations):

> Criticism there may be concerning the fitness and originality of women in other branches of art work, but there can be no question that she is distinctly at home in the field of decoration. For ages she has studied the decoration of her person and her home, and her eyes have been trained to the harmonies of color. (477)

It is instructive here to turn to Dreiser's views in *A Traveler at Forty* concerning another type of woman in the arts, the actress. In this text he again notes woman's affinity for color, makes a more direct connection between woman and the imaginative, and, importantly, presents essentialism as the basis for these preferences rather than the socialization suggested in the Cox essay.[25] Dreiser declares the actress belongs on stage "by right of mere womanhood, the art of looks, form, temperament, mobility, peculiarly suited to this realm of show, color and make-believe."[26] He notes that "women of ambition, aspiration, *artistic longings*—act, anyhow, all the time. They lie like anything" (emphasis added). Concerned only with self and its presentation (i.e., with appearances), woman is completely uninterested in "life" and its study; according to Dreiser, only men pursue areas like philosophy and science requiring a spirit of inquiry and exercise of logic and intellect. Significantly, in the theater's world of feeling and artifice, the male actor is less successful than the female, since not only is he less at home in it but he must also ape the "active, constructive man in other lines [of endeavor]" (8-9).

Dreiser's associating interest in life with the more outward-directed and investigatory masculine attitude suggests he considered the largely dark-toned, urban realist work of Ashcan artists like William Glackens (illustrator of *A Traveler at Forty*)[27] and Everett Shinn (the primary model for *The "Genius"* 's Eugene Witla) and of his close friend William L. Sonntag, who worked similarly,[28] an innately male form of artmaking in contrast to modernist abstraction, with its emphasis on the decorative and frequent use of imaginary subjects. In sum, abstraction becomes the feminine side of a visual-art duality. Such a construct would have permitted Dreiser to represent comfortably Rice's/Wrynn's impressive achievements as a painter, for she is in her element as a woman. Furthermore, since her colorful, expressive work demonstrates essential femaleness, her professional commitment might believably give way to desires and concerns Dreiser considered more indispensable to women.

An intriguing possibility in all of this is that Wrynn's ultimate

defeat allowed Dreiser to resolve symbolically the conflict he must have felt in finding himself attracted to two opposed bases for creating art—realism and abstraction. Dreiser, in fact, never became a vocal advocate of abstraction. Comments in his magazine articles of the 1890s indicate that from an early point he ranked the purely visual below content (this despite lavish praise for effective handling of color and drawing). For example, he states, "It doesn't matter much how poor the color may be. It isn't vital to the tale, that it [color] should be the measure of accuracy of detail" ("Henry Mosler" 205). Commenting on disputes over the relative merits of content and the visual, he cites the art of poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the greatness of which he felt resided not in color, as claimed ("Rossetti was not a great colorist by any means"), but rather in spiritualized content. He continues, "This always seemed to me to prove that an idea might be so fine, so beautiful and ethereal, that if the color work were almost bad and the drawing almost mediocre, the picture would still be a great picture and the painter of it a great painter" ("Benjamin Eggleston" 219).

Dreiser's privileging of content and his fundamental preference for social realism, combined with the need to demonstrate a new significance in Wrynn's work in Paris, led him to describe the imagery of his protagonist's department store murals in a way that transgresses the distinctions he associated with gender. He could not resist transforming the eighteenth-century subjects of Rice's Wanamaker panels into contemporary themes emphasizing the urban crowd, the human element of the passing scene, so much at the heart of realist work.[29] Wrynn's Parisian subjects include the well-to-do amusing themselves at the race track and having dinner or late tea outdoors at a fashionable, outlying restaurant, as well as

> a street rout or scene in the Bois—cabs and hansoms fluttering here and there in clouds, literally throngs of faces, coats, elbows, legs, hats, upon an adjacent sidewalk, and . . . a mass of dancers in the Bal Bullier [a popular student and working-class dance hall], really moving and really dancing, their hats, faces, dresses, bare arms, legs, suggesting a kind of mulch or mush of life. (145)[30]

Certainly many of Rice's paintings depict Parisian parks, cafés, and restaurants and even incorporate imagery from character sketches.[31] Yet compared to urban realist treatments of similar scenes, they evidence little concern for the vitality of these environments or for the human comedy played out in them that so intrigued Dreiser.

In detailing Wrynn's subjects, Dreiser had introduced Rice's own, more formal concerns as a modernist by describing the racegoers' costumes as "most divergent and startlingly colored." Impor-

tantly, as he continues to discuss Wrynn's murals, he suggests their true significance lies in transcending subject to foreground process and the purely visual elements of painting. Characterizing Wrynn's approach as completely original, his narrator marvels at "the light, the space, the daring, the force, the raw reds, greens, blues, mauves, whites, yellows! . . . No conservative and so traditional modulation of tones: no rich couch of underpainting. Instead, all glaring, direct, resonant." Perceptively, he calls her approach "a presentation [of the medium] so literal as to be meaningless for some" (146). In this radical shift in emphasis, from significant subject matter to visual elements having a life of their own and ceasing to function as a vehicle for content, it is as if Dreiser were describing a different set of paintings. He seems more directly inspired by Rice's own work, twenty-two examples of which had been at his disposal since 1915.

McKail's approach to abstraction comes off less well. Though technically superior, it is less colorful and appears more labored. Compared to Wrynn's, it is "neither as liberated nor as daring or facile" (151) in the positive sense of having "dash," as the narrator makes clear in elaborating on this point. Wrynn's work is

> not only lush and fecund and floreate—canvases which might well spring of an aphrodisiac mood [i.e., reflecting Wrynn's affair with McKail]—but broad and comprehensive and strong; broader and more comprehensive and . . . more colorful and imaginative than anything which came from McKail. (162-63)

Dreiser's awarding the palm to Wrynn is not surprising, apart from any motivation to get back at Fergusson for his relationship with Rice. His critical eye would have seized on Fergusson's preference for more controlled and studied effects, including emphatically geometric shapes and minutely complex color relationships, which differed from Rice's simpler, freer, more dynamic approach.[32] And, more significantly, since Fauvism's objective was to produce expressive, color-based (i.e., decorative) abstraction rather than investigate life as urban realism did, its successful practice—like acting in Dreiser's typology—could be associated with female nature; in fact, it became reasonable for a woman to be the more successful practitioner. She might even create work so visually powerful it verged on the "gross," although, as previously suggested, this situation represented a dilemma for Dreiser, whose narrator is unable to reconcile a feminine personality with anything other than refinement (162).

McKail, we are told, pursues a more theoretical approach, a systematic inquiry into giving painted form a density and weight matching his perceptions of objects' solidity (159).[33] According to principles

advanced in *A Traveler at Forty*, it is natural for him as a male to take this more investigatory tack, one devoted to uncovering and communicating some truth. (Dreiser also underscores the maleness of McKail's art in describing his methods as an attempt "more to conquer than to paint, to make paint do his will, express his sense of reality" [160].) McKail's art, however, suffers from a double whammy: his investigations into reality lack the all-important social orientation of urban realism (significantly, at one point the narrator suggests McKail might do better painting in another style [151]), and in the realm of abstraction, which emphasizes visual appeal, his work fails to compel as Wrynn's paintings do with their "love of line and color, regardless of depth or truth." Dreiser's characterizing Wrynn's work as "at once less real and more appealing" (160) again suggests he had come to associate modernist painting, like acting, with "female" proclivities.

If we return to *A Traveler at Forty*, we find comments about women that direct us to the primary theme of "Ellen Adams Wrynn." They explain—more than any ambivalence Dreiser felt about modernism or grudges he bore Rice—why Wrynn, despite her talent, despite practicing an art to which she as a woman is preeminently suited, is not in the end permitted success in her field. They indicate why Dreiser, in elaborating his portrait, felt free to downplay what he knew of Rice's personality and ambitions, as well as external factors affecting her career. Dreiser, we recall, believed that the truest, most significant fiction entailed exploring male-female relationships. In the section of *A Traveler at Forty* discussing the actress, he defines the successful relationship for a woman as depending upon a man's shining in those areas to which her gender is less inclined: "Let the men have knowledge, strength, fame, force—that is their business. The real man, her man, should have some one of these things if she is going to love him very much" (9). Indicating he is referring to "the semi-artistic woman with ambition," Dreiser extends the concept to women in general, telling his reader he pities equally "the strongest, most ambitious woman I ever saw" and the most helpless, least intelligent, for all women are "struggling to buy this superior masculine strength against which they can lean, to which they can fly in the hour of terror" (10).

It is this desired state of dependence, of being completed by another perceived as superior, that Wrynn experiences with McKail. Dreiser's narrator observes that

> There are certain combinations, for a woman at least, which instinctively you know are right. There are certain powerful, sturdy men who take and bind certain sensuous, male-loving women as with hooks of steel. *It makes no slightest difference that* there are moderate variations in

> viewpoint or that *the woman has certain gifts which the male has not*. . . . (167, emphasis added)

Finding support in McKail's strong, principled character (as well as their satisfying physical relationship), Wrynn is encouraged to develop

> those superior art emotions which now showed in the brilliant canvases which I [the narrator] so admired. To be able to do them she needed that substratum of intense and even heavy reality which was of the very body and mind of McKail. (167-68)

Driving home this point, Dreiser describes McKail as Wrynn's "rock," the "physical base" from which she takes "flight." Worship of his qualities "gave her the zest for what she was," reinforcing her sense of self and enabling her self-expression (168). Through Ellen Adams Wrynn's ascendancy and subsequent descent, Dreiser demonstrates his belief that successful pairing or its absence impacts every aspect of a woman's life, sustaining or undermining all her efforts.

Writing "Ellen Adams Wrynn" provided Dreiser with the challenge of filling in gaps in factual information about Anne Estelle Rice, which he did intelligently yet in a way shaped by his existing beliefs. His interpretations were clearly affected by ambivalence toward the woman careerist, by a sense that career was not and should not be a woman's ultimate concern. Prioritizing sexuality and seeing life in terms of gendered expression, he could no more fully individualize Rice's aims in art than he could her motivations in life. Dreiser's general intentions as a writer of fiction reflect those same perspectives, and, reality-based though it may be, "Ellen Adams Wrynn" is, in the end, a work of fiction. As such, its primary purpose was to foreground what was for Dreiser the ultimate drama of life and thus the substance of great literature: the "man-woman struggle," expressed in terms of "appeal, pull" and—significantly—"differences."

Notes

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1. Theodore Dreiser Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Rice's letters and notes to Dreiser, unless otherwise indicated, are in this collection and are quoted by permission of the University of Pennsylvania.

2. Dreiser locates Wrynn's studio in Montmartre on the Boulevard de

Rochechouart, rather than using Rice's Montparnasse address on the rue Denfert-Rochereau, in order to give it more romantic associations. The address indicated for Rice's studio in *A Traveler at Forty* is correct, but Fergusson's is described as being on the Boulevard Raspail, where his good friend Samuel Peploe, not he, had quarters. Although Dreiser's description of the Matissean works he sees in both studios as "neo-impressionistic" is inaccurate (the term denotes a distinctive 1880s style developed by Seurat), the error is not surprising. Through the mid-teens modernist terminology was often loosely applied, especially by writers with limited exposure to avant-garde art. It was reasonable for Dreiser to assume "neo-impressionist" indicated any advance beyond impressionism.

3. The physical description in the text fits Rice, although Dreiser gives her hair color, which was auburn, as black—likely part of his attempt to disguise identity. His description of Ellen Adams Wrynn as "a chestnut blonde" (133) is closer to fact.

4. Dreiser must have been aware of the modernist exhibitions initiated in 1907 by photographer Alfred Stieglitz at "291," his well-known Fifth Avenue gallery; these received considerable press attention, including support from critic James Gibbons Huneker, a friend of Dreiser's. Much earlier, between 1899 and 1902, Dreiser had written articles praising Stieglitz's urban realist photographs and acknowledging his leadership of photography's pictorialist movement. The two men, who were friendly at that time, may have had a subsequent falling out, making Dreiser unwilling to visit the gallery. His contacts with Stieglitz appear to have ceased after 1902, resuming again only in 1916 or 1917 (Whelan 194, 391; Lowe 209). Stieglitz exhibited Picasso's work in spring 1911. Dreiser's oddly emphatic comment in *A Traveler at Forty* that he had not heard of Picasso much less seen his work before visiting London in late 1911 (69), beyond providing evidence that he did not frequent "291" shows, seems a barb aimed directly at Stieglitz.

5. Irene Gammel finds that the city in general was, for Dreiser, "a deeply sexualized space" in that it offered potential gratification of all desires with few moral constraints. She observes that Dreiser personifies the city as a *femme fatale,* seducing the would-be male conqueror and then destroying him (61-63). A particularly striking example of Dreiser's assigning individualized, anthropomorphic qualities to cities occurs in his memoir *A Book About Myself* (1922). Recalling that he had found Chicago "seeth[ing] with a peculiarly human or realistic atmosphere," Dreiser adds, "It is given to some cities, as to some lands, to suggest romance, and to me Chicago did that hourly. It sang, I thought, and . . . I was singing with it" (qtd. in Hakutani, *Young Dreiser* 191).

6. Unfortunately, little of Dreiser's correspondence remains among Rice's papers, which are in the possession of the artist's family in London**.** I am grateful to the family, particularly the artist's son, the late David Drey, and his wife, Gill, for making this material available to me and allowing me to quote from it.

7. Portions of one letter are missing; others may have been destroyed. The artist's family has speculated to me in conversation that Rice miscarried Fergusson's child. All letters from Rice to individuals other than Dreiser are in the artist's family papers.

8. Rice's family papers. The only truly progressive gallery Dreiser mentions is Martin Birnbaum's Berlin Photographic Company. Curiously, since he emphasizes the importance of a Fifth Avenue address, he omits the establishment most associated with modernism, Stieglitz's "291."

9. Similarly, in 1918 she suggests they not make it widely known she is pregnant "for artistic reasons" (Rice to Drey, [June 27, 1918]).

10. Drey, founder-editor of the *Manchester Playgoer* and a contributor to the *Manchester Guardian* and other publications, was an extremely open-minded and perceptive art critic. However, he was unable to support himself through writing and had to assume duties as a London representative for his family's textile manufacturing business in Stockport, near Manchester.

11. Dreiser's narrator, on the other hand, tells us he "commandeered" three critics and brought them to Wrynn's studio (173). Two notes Rice sent Dreiser while in New York make no mention of contacts requested or secured through him. One introduces a friend working in modeling and film, whom Rice hopes he can help; the other offers to introduce him and his lover, Kirah Markham, to British writer and editor Frank Harris, a personal friend then lecturing in New York. Rice's contact with John O'Hara Cosgrave of *The World*, whom Dreiser had known much earlier when both men worked for Butterick, was achieved through another acquaintance. Although Rice did meet Stieglitz, there are no indications Dreiser was involved, and from the absence of Huneker's name in her detailed reports to Drey, we can assume Dreiser did not introduce her to the critic. However, Dreiser's reference to the Berlin Photographic Company and Macbeth Galleries (the latter one of the few places to exhibit Ashcan realism) in his November 12, 1913, letter must have encouraged Rice to approach them. Remembering Macbeth's gallery as academic but hoping it had changed in the wake of the Armory Show, she was not entirely surprised to find it unreceptive to her art (Rice to Drey, Jan. 5, 1915).

12. *La Négresse* and *Nicoline* appear on a list of works transferred to Dreiser (Rice's papers). Dreiser informed Rice he had hung "the robust bust of a negro girl" along with *The Egyptian Dancers* shortly after receiving the twenty-two paintings from Holley (Dreiser to Rice, Oct. 7, 1915). *Nicoline* is identifiable from a reproduction of it in Huntly Carter's *The New Spirit in Drama and Art* (London: F. Palmer, 1912).

13. Dreiser's individual sketch titles are revealing, as well. As Gammel notes, unlike the titles used in *Twelve Men*, which reference the male subjects' individual qualities, those in *A Gallery of Women* consist only of a series of women's names. Gammel introduces this point to demonstrate a connection with Freud's and Breuer's case studies of female hysteria (85, n. 6); however, this sequence of feminine names, with no additional associated meaning, also serves to objectify the women subjects.

Both Gammel and Susan Wolstenholme emphasize Dreiser's identification with the entrepreneur's acquisitiveness, which extended to collecting art and womanizing. Wolstenholme sees *A Gallery of Women* as an attempt by Dreiser to create a picture gallery of his own. She notes the privileged position of the text's male narrator, who cues "the many portraits to tell their stories, as the Duke of Ferrara in Browning's poem pointed to the portrait of his last Duchess" (252).

14. This August letter can be dated to 1917 because of a comment about writing from the east coast of England, where Rice is known to have painted in the summer of 1917. By the following spring, the Dreys had moved from the address given in the letter.

15. Some wartime mail may never have reached Dreiser. In one letter Rice inquires whether he received her Christmas card, which she remembered as "an impression of sunny Corsica" (Rice often created her own illustrated greeting cards). She added jokingly that it might have been intercepted by a censor (Rice to Dreiser, June 30, 1916). Letters may also have been lost or not preserved, although the existence of relatively minor items among Rice's papers in the Theodore Dreiser Papers suggests no letters were discarded.

16. The individual was Russet George, wife of British writer W. L. George, a former *Rhythm* associate. George, a novelist, editor, and social progressive, had been on an American lecture tour with his wife at the time of her sudden death. Rice had provided the couple with a letter of introduction to Dreiser, whom they were eager to meet.

17. For more detailed discussion of this and other factors diminishing Rice's level of professional activity in England, see Nathanson, "Anne Estelle Rice" 8-9 and *The Expressive Fauvism of Anne Estelle Rice* 29, 30.

18. As Swanberg notes, *A Gallery of Women* embarrassed and angered a number of the sketches' subjects (218). Wolstenholme characterizes the collection as "at least as much like a shooting gallery as a picture gallery" (252).

19. See also Swanberg 324, who gives a briefer account of that meeting. Both cite as their source an autobiographical manuscript written by Cudlipp.

20. Griffin, for example, notes "[t]he tendency in Dreiser's fiction of asserting both artistic and entrepreneurial achievement as sources of male fulfillment" ("Dreiser's Short Stories" 300). Hakutani observes that the women seeking professional success in *A Gallery of Women* do so to feel personal self-worth rather than to test their ability to survive in competition with others, a motive of Dreiser's male protagonists ("Dream of Success" 238).

21. This issue provides the focus of Laura Hapke's "Men Strike, Women Sew" and is also discussed in her article "Dreiser and the Tradition of the American Working Girl Novel" 11, 14-15. See, too, Kathy Frederickson 13. Shelley Fisher Fishkin has demonstrated that *An American Tragedy*'s Roberta Alden, a lowly factory worker with no particular investment in her job and a passive, unsophisticated personality, is the product of Dreiser's uncritical acceptance of stereotyped press descriptions of real-life murder victim Billy Brown. While admitting that we cannot know whether Dreiser uncovered (and chose to ignore) more accurate information about Brown, Fishkin still finds it significant that he did abandon journalistic stereotypes to craft a more complex and empathetic individual in the case of Clyde Griffiths, Roberta's murdering lover (see esp. 12 and 23 n.8).

22. Yoshinobu Hakutani, editor of a wide selection of Dreiser's early writings, has emphasized Dreiser's admiration and support for these women professionals ("Dream of Success" 239).

23. Two profiles on women in fields other than art are especially revealing in the material Dreiser chooses to emphasize. In the first, novelist Amelia Barr makes rabidly anti-woman and anti-feminist statements which Dreiser

quotes at some length, commenting only that her views are "severe" and display prejudice but remain "interesting" ("Amelia Barr" 81). In the second essay, lawyer Clara Foltz's feminist statements are moderated by her other comments emphasizing the exceptional woman and the need to balance professional achievement with femininity ("The Career of a Modern Portia" 144). As Fishkin points out, Dreiser, unlike the true male feminist, was never "openly committed . . . to a feminist agenda" (2). She aptly characterizes him as "both ahead of his time and a creature of his time, a knot of contradictions as intricate and complicated as the culture itself" (1). Gammel finds that the feminist inclinations evidenced in Dreiser's writings—his ascribing power to women in relationships, his exploring women's attempts to expand on traditional roles and achieve autonomy through financial independence—are ultimately circumscribed by fear of the woman who is truly empowered. Uncomfortable with the idea of a woman's exercising complete sexual agency or giving priority to intellectual and creative life, he is unable to present a woman of this type without containing or diminishing her energy in some manner (75-77, 86, 97-98).

24. In the January 1896 *Ev'ry Month*, he asserts that "those painters and sculptors who desire to gain enduring fame must paint and carve the scenes of to-day" and cites the attraction of the crowds on Broadway to art with contemporary subjects, while "a painting of the nine muses in classic garb" interests only the individual ("Reflections" 46-7). Although many of Dreiser's 1890s articles comment positively on male artists depicting ideal subjects, two points should be kept in mind. First, these profiles, produced for various magazines and usually intended to celebrate established reputations, offered less opportunity than *Ev'ry Month* (which Dreiser edited) to express more personal views, including his growing enthusiasm for the contemporary. Second, late neoclassical work, influenced by the camera and realist art, often exhibited a physical naturalism to which Dreiser could respond (Kenyon Cox's work was not of this sort). Although Dreiser praises beautiful form in these essays, he seems to admire most the ability of these artists to incorporate natural effects. See, for example, his description of Frederick MacMonnies's *Bacchante and Child* as "represent[ing] the beauty of a sudden and spontaneous movement" and his judgment that MacMonnies's most successful sculptures are those that follow nature most closely ("The Art of MacMonnies and Morgan" 212, 213, 215). Other factors encouraging Dreiser's positive reactions to ideal subjects were the embodiment of universal truths in allegorical themes, a concern he also admired in contemporary caricature and realist art, and his contempt for puritanical attacks on subjects involving the nude.

25. A substantial body of aesthetic writing presents the intuitive/emotional and the intellectual as fundamentally opposed ways of creating art, an opposition reflected in a preference for color (in the first case) or drawing (in the second). Statements describing the color/drawing polarity in gendered terms occur as early as the seventeenth century; however, as Tamar Garb notes, these "operated more on the level of metaphor than as a framework for the assessment of the pictorial practices suited to men and women." By mid-nineteenth century, when distinguishing between masculine and feminine spheres had become a significant aspect of cultural discourse, this duality was

consistently linked to a gendered way of perceiving and expressing (237). Such views would have encouraged Dreiser's perceptions about women and color, even though he does not connect drawing with maleness.

26. Tamar Garb cites similar views in examining period perceptions about Impressionism's "allegedly 'feminine' characteristics: its sensuality, its dependence on sensation and superficial appearances, its physicality, and its capriciousness" (232). Whitney Chadwick, discussing eighteenth-century comments relating color in art to the artifice of women's make-up, notes the persistence of this analogy even into contemporary art writing (39). It is important to note, however, that "color" does not always have a gendered application in Dreiser's writing. Color is sometimes simply a visual element, well or badly handled by an artist. It can also serve as a designation for painting, as in an essay in which he tells us that artist Henry Mosler "early caught the power of expressing in color the earthly scenes which appealed to him most" ("Henry Mosler" 205). In an article on illustrator-turned-painter Benjamin Eggleston, Dreiser underscores the greater demands of painting (working in color) compared to illustration, especially journalistic illustration, which generally involved rapid execution, in black and white, of visual impressions. Citing Eggleton's comment, made while reviewing his published newspaper sketches, that it is relatively easy to learn to draw accurately and well, Dreiser adds, "It is breaking away and capturing the art of color for your ideas that involves the struggle" ("Benjamin Eggleston" 222). As we might expect, Dreiser also associated color with the variety and energy of life, particularly urban life. That is certainly the sense of "color" as used in title for his 1901 essay on artist William L. Sonntag, "The Color of To-day," and that of his collection of sketches, *The Color of a Great City* (1923).

27. Glackens's earlier illustrations for Dreiser's writings included drawings for "Whence the Song," an article on Tin Pan Alley, published in 1900 in *Harper's Weekly*, and for the article "A True Patriarch," appearing in *McClure's* the following year.

28. Dreiser credited Sonntag, whom he met in 1895, with making him more aesthetically aware. Importantly, though, the visual qualities Sonntag called to his attention, rather than operating chiefly as abstraction, were closely bound up with subject; they demonstrated how poetry existed within the seemingly unpoetic. Sonntag leads Dreiser to a location on Broadway where the lively crowds and illuminated railroad station and trains are visually compelling, points out light and shadow effects beneath the "L," and indicates myriad colors in a pool of water, a phenomenon Dreiser admits "I had scarcely observed before" ("The Color of To-day" 276). What Dreiser describes is cultivation of sensitivity to optical reality as practiced by realists and impressionists rather than the use of nature as a springboard for inventing visual harmonies and contrasts associated with later modernism. Even Dreiser's article title—"The Color of To-day"—reflects his tendency at that point to ally form with reality-based content. Dreiser's friendship with Sonntag would also have enforced his associating male creativity (importantly, on the part of a social realist artist) with the intellectual and investigatory. He discusses in admiring detail Sonntag's engineering of model boats and trains and describes him as "never weary of discussing the power of the mind" and "lov[ing] to get up

mathematical and mechanical demonstrations of certain philosophical truths" (275).

29. Critics have noted an impulse toward androgyny in Dreiser's thought and writing. I am grateful to Stephen Brennan for pointing out that Dreiser's imposition of masculinity on Wrynn's murals, through giving them dynamic urban subjects, may derive from that concern.

30. Compare Dreiser's description of the Broadway setting Sonntag points out to him for its visual possibilities: "walks were alive with people. A perfect jam of vehicles marked the spot where the horse and cable cars intersected" ("The Color of To-day" 276). See, too, Joseph Kwiat's discussion of Everett Shinn's crowd subjects and their influence on the art of Dreiser protagonist Eugene Witla ("Dreiser's *The 'Genius'* " 17, 25, 27, 28) and his examination of Dreiser's appreciation for Sonntag and Ashcan art ("Dreiser and the Graphic Artist" 127-31).

31. The restaurant subject may, in fact, have been inspired by either of two oils Rice brought to New York in 1914: *Afternoon Tea* (c. 1908, private collection; Nathanson cat. 1) and *Afternoon Tea, Château Madrid, Paris* (c. 1913, private collection). The first, which parallels Ashcan taste in its Manet-like subject, palette, and brushwork, depicts an attractive woman in elegant outerwear before a tea table, buildings in the background glittering with lights. The second and more abstracted piece is a group scene like Wrynn's subject but having an unnatural, dream-like stillness. Neither painting came into Dreiser's keeping, but both were available during Rice's New York stay, and the earlier work remained with Holley.

Rice, Fergusson, and Dreiser visited the Bal Bullier (*Traveler* 233). During or before 1911, Rice had painted a Bal Bullier subject. This painting is no longer extant, but since it remained in her possession until at least 1913, it could have been the source of Wrynn's dance panel. Another possible source is a mural of contemporary dancers painted by Pierre Gatier and Georges Lepape for the Moulin de la Galette. Popular with artists from Impressionist days, this dance hall may well have been on Rice's and Fergusson's list of places for Dreiser to see, especially since Lepape had recently illustrated an album of designs by an avant-garde couturier admired by the Fergusson circle.

32. For expanded discussion of Rice's and Fergusson's differing approaches to Fauvism, see Nathanson, "Anne Estelle Rice" 4 and *Expressive Fauvism* 15-17.

33. This aspect of his art and its limited, somber palette (160) recall Picasso's and Braque's 1908-09 proto-Cubist paintings. Although Rice and Fergusson were acquainted with Picasso's work, when they began to produce Cubist paintings, their model was the more decorative, narratively oriented style practiced by Gleizes' and Metzinger's circle from around 1911. At the time Dreiser visited Paris, Cubism had yet to figure significantly in their art. In fact, even though Dreiser's narrator sees paintings in Wrynn's Paris studio supporting her claim of having "gone over" to Picasso's way of working (155-56), his more extensive description of her art emphasizes its Fauvism (160-63), reflecting the nature of Rice's own work in 1911-12. Only in New York in late 1914 did Dreiser see paintings by Rice in a true Cubist vein. His narrator's reaction to the more recent work Wrynn has brought to New York as "not

nearly as good—neither so colorful nor so spirited" (170), while calculated to underscore Wrynn's post-McKail decline, was undoubtedly prompted by Dreiser's lack of enthusiasm for Rice's more decidedly Cubist efforts.

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"The Shock of Sympathy": Bob Ames's Reading and Re-reading of Sister Carrie

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Critics of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* have been remarkably consistent in their consideration of one of its key characters, the electrical engineer and inventor Bob Ames. Rather than reading Ames as a character who, like Hurstwood, changes as his relationship with Carrie changes, critics have consistently labeled Ames a static "spokesman" of Dreiser's own views. Though this label is, in part, understandable, given Ames's relatively limited appearance in the original Doubleday, Page text of 1900, it has persisted even since the 1981 publication of the "unexpurgated" University of Pennsylvania edition of *Sister Carrie*, in which Ames appears more prominently.[1] Just as Henry James, in his prefaces to *The Portrait of Lady* and *The Ambassadors*, read his own characters Henrietta Stackpole and Maria Gostrey as "wheels to the coach" (54) and a "prime idea" (324), critics have continued to read Ames as a structural device inserted by Dreiser to roll his novel along. Bringing Ames into "the coach" and reading him as a dynamic character yields new insights into his importance in the novel. For as Ames interacts with Carrie, his character and his "reading" of Carrie continue to develop, and this development suggests how Dreiser wanted Carrie—and by extension *Sister Carrie*—to be read.

The consistent identification of Ames as a spokesman is remarkable given the breadth, depth, and evolution of readings of *Sister Carrie*, including Walter Benn Michaels' influential and controversial essay "*Sister Carrie's* Popular Economy."[2] Critics writing before Michaels generally assumed that Dreiser criticized consumer capitalism in *Sister Carrie*, and they viewed Ames as a mouthpiece for his anti-capitalist critique; since Michaels, critics have often reexamined Dreiser's relationship to capitalism and used Ames as a test as to whether the novel and Dreiser himself endorse or indict the desires of

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consumer capitalism.[3] Essentially, the terms applied to Ames remain the same: He is a failed spokesman because the very idea of a spokesman implies a thinly developed character, or he is a failed spokesman because his apparently naive anti-capitalist message contradicts the desires which he incites in Carrie. Donald Pizer, for example, writes in the first mode: "Ames fails to convince because, unlike Drouet and Hurstwood, who are fully realized dramatic figures, he is almost entirely a spokesman" (69). Initially, Michaels also reads Ames as a spokesman offering commentary on the importance of restraint (34, 41). However, Michaels, initiating the second mode, comes to see this reading as incomplete because of the ultimate effect that Ames has on Carrie:

> But Ames succeeds very quickly in making himself interesting again, urging her to get out of musical comedy and go in for tragedy instead, putting an end to her self-satisfaction by creating for her a new desire. . . . The ideal that Ames represents to Carrie is thus an ideal of dissatisfaction, of perpetual desire. (42)

Thus, Carrie responds to Ames as Michaels responds to Dreiser, as an "ideal" proponent of the unrestrained desires of consumer capitalism. Though Michaels rightly emphasizes Ames's crucial role in understanding how the novel might be read, his reading assumes that Ames can be simply identified with Dreiser and that all desires in the novel are equivalent, so that the desires that Ames instills in Carrie differ from those produced by Drouet or Hurstwood only in degree, not in kind. However, Ames is not simply a spokesman for the author's fixed ideas, nor does he affect Carrie in exactly the same way as does Drouet or Hurstwood. Ames's complex origins and evolving interaction with Carrie point to his unique status in the novel as a character who desires to understand rather than possess her and who, in so desiring, helps to inspire and recognize "the perfect Carrie" (485). Thus, the evolving interaction between Ames and Carrie points to Dreiser's evolving ideal of art and implies a method of how to read such art.

Viewing Ames as a complex character is in keeping with his composite origins. In his reading of Ames, Stephen C. Brennan compares Ames as he appears in Dreiser's manuscript (the source for the material subsequently added to the "unexpurgated" edition) to Ames as he appears in the Doubleday, Page edition. Brennan identifies Ames as a prop and a "spokesman" while pointing to the limits of this perspective:

> [Ames] seems to exist primarily to fill a structural position in the narrative—Carrie's third and final ideal—and to

> serve as Dreiser's spokesman. In fact, some readers believe he is underdeveloped simply because Dreiser identifies too closely with him. This theory, though plausible, oversimplifies Ames. The young genius inventor and social theorist is a composite figure who has been linked with men Dreiser especially admired, most probably Edison and Tolstoy. (17-18)

Brennan suggests that another source for Ames is Dreiser's first wife, Sara White (or "Jug"), who encouraged Dreiser to pursue literature, just as Ames encourages Carrie to pursue more serious dramatic art (18). Other critics, such as Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr., have found the sources of Ames's character in Dreiser's mother, his brother Paul, and in Dreiser himself, and Hussman was first to argue that Ames is primarily based on Thomas Edison, whom Dreiser interviewed for *Success* magazine shortly before he began writing *Sister Carrie* (30-31).[4]

Similarly, many critics have noted that Carrie is also a composite figure largely based on Dreiser's sister Emma and Dreiser himself (Moers 28-31). Brennan, in identifying Ames in part as Jug, identifies Carrie as Dreiser, and Pizer also notes many of the biographical connections between them (36). Since both Ames and Carrie represent the author to some extent, identifying Ames as Dreiser's "spokesman" would put Dreiser in the strange position of being a spokesman to himself. This apparent contradiction, in fact, points to the centrality and open-ended nature of Ames and Carrie's relationship; in effect, their two meetings allow Dreiser to use a dialectic method to explore his own ideas about literature, art, writing, and reading.[5] Pizer makes a similar point, noting that his split affinities between Carrie and Ames allow Dreiser to explore his own idealized and complex conceptions of writing and of himself as a writer (66).[6] However, in emphasizing Carrie's dynamic character, Pizer underestimates Ames's similar, if less fully realized, dynamism, particularly the way that Ames's reading of Carrie develops and better allows him to speak to her. Furthermore, these changes in Ames's character and his relationship with Carrie shed light on the crucial issue in *Sister Carrie* of how character (and characters) are to be read in a world where the values placed on appearances are rapidly changing.

Stanley Corkin (who typically connects Ames with Dreiser) outlines the new ways of reading necessary to understand how Dreiser's character portrayals depend on a complex connection of character and objects, identity and appearances (101-02). Corkin, like Michaels, uses Howells as a starting point for understanding Dreiser's methods (81). For Corkin, Dreiser "does not disrupt Howells' vision of the realist author but extends it by assuming the power of objects to define the

virtual sum of human being" (86), a vision in keeping with "the rise of consumer culture in the early portion of the twentieth century" (92). Corkin concludes that reading the novel "correctly" depends on recognizing the increasing power of commodities:

> The novel's impact relies on the reader's comprehension of the world of commodities, as it assumes not only that the objects of the world are meaningful, but also that the specific importance of these things is fairly obvious. In addition, the novel requires that the reader associate these objects, in all their resonance, with the book's human characters. If the reader fails to perform these operations, the book deteriorates into a morass of description. . . . If the novel is read "correctly" it engages and affects. (89-90)

Corkin speculates that many of Dreiser's early readers were unable to read the novel "correctly": "Perhaps the novel's initial commercial failure . . . was due to the fact that American readers were not yet used to making the intellectual leaps the book required of them, that is, knowing the meanings of various common objects and being able to apply those meanings immediately to objectified humans" (104). In keeping with his view of "objectified humans," Corkin describes *Sister Carrie* as a naturalist novel in which character development is impossible.

While Corkin's description of how to read the novel "correctly" is instructive in understanding how Ames develops his reading skills, the "correct" reading method that Corkin describes does not yield as uniformly negative judgments of character as he suggests—commodities are only one part of the world of appearances, a world that Dreiser considers with great complexity throughout his work. As Pizer notes, Carrie's defining attribute is her ability to perceive appearances in an imaginative way that allows her to transform her character by comprehending beauty in commonplace, mass-produced objects. For her, this ability to perceive beauty in things extends to a kind of sympathy for others. Desire, based on this imaginative mode of perception, can even become a kind of moral aesthetic, so "that the desiring imagination has the ability to create beauty out of the tawdry and to transform the illicit into the virtuous while in pursuit of the tawdry" (Pizer 55). Seeing, then, is not limited to seeing surfaces, but extends to seeing possibilities as well.

As many critics have noted, such transformative possibilities are most evident in the images of the theater and acting that appear throughout the novel.[7] Deborah M. Garfield writes,

> Dreiser's city pilgrims, serving a double theatrical function, are actors who change costume and play a variety of

> parts, as well as spectators in thrall, an audience which watches other players and is moved, even transformed by the performance. . . . The two roles of spectator and actor are, thus, inextricably bound, cause and effect—the urge to watch generating an equally compelling desire to be watched. (224)[8]

Thus, all of Dreiser's characters are actors and audience members whose two "theatrical functions" are "inextricably bound." To see Ames as a spokesman is to see him only as a weak and passive actor when in fact his role is much more complex: He is an "actor" not only in the way he appears "on stage" in the modern urban scene, but in his power to act, or influence, other characters. Furthermore, Ames improves his skills as an actor, as Carrie does, by developing his abilities to observe how others act. To understand Ames, then, it is necessary to understand not only what he says but how he performs, observes, and changes. In fact, earlier in the novel Dreiser warns against placing too much value on words:

> People in general attach too much importance to words. They are under the illusion that talking effects great results. As a matter of fact, words are as a rule the shallowest portion of all the argument. They but dimly represent the great surging feelings and desires which lie behind. When the distraction of the tongue is removed, the heart listens. (118)

Corkin, among others, has suggested that the diminished value that Dreiser places on words marks a degeneration in communication with the rise of consumer capitalism (100). However, words do matter in *Sister Carrie*, but they have to be read as part of a complex method of communication and perception which includes appearances, gestures, and objects. As Paul A. Orlov shows, such a method of reading can in effect increase the possibilities for understanding Dreiser's characters (140-42).

Such possibilities are evident in the first scene in which Ames appears. When Carrie meets Ames through her friends the Vances, they all dine at a luxurious restaurant, Sherry's, and go to the theater, and in both places the conversation between Carrie and Ames centers on their observations of their surroundings and of each other. However, as spectators, Carrie and Ames have significantly different modes of perception which lead them to different conclusions. Carrie is always an alert observer who notes many objects and details. On their way to the restaurant, "Carrie had noticed the appearance of gayety and pleasure-seeking in the streets which they were following" (330). Once at the restaurant, she notes its appearance, the prices on the

menu, and name-brand objects like "Tiffany" and "Haviland" (332), and she "studied the company with open eyes" (333). After examining the scene before her, she thinks, "What a wonderful thing it was to be rich" (331)—a trite thought when the words alone are considered but one which takes on more meaning in the context of her experience and of her close observations of the complex spectacle before her. In contrast, Dreiser writes briefly, Ames "was looking away rather abstractedly at the crowd" (333). This looking away from Carrie marks a recurring motif, a looking away to ideas while failing to see Carrie's reality and possibilities, just as earlier Hurstwood "gazed fixedly away at nothing in particular, as if he were thinking of something which concerned her not at all" before professing his love for Carrie (127-28).

Ames does briefly acknowledge the theatrical spectacle when he states that the people at Sherry's "pay so much more than these things are worth. They put on so much show" (334), though he does not differentiate any of the players in this "show." Carrie, in contrast, uses the details of the scene to help her understand the roles of everyone involved, including her own role as a spectator. As they arrive at the restaurant, she notes the "large and portly doorman . . . uniformed youths who took care of canes, overcoats and the like," and Mrs. Vance's privileged role as a woman who is "young, beautiful and well-off" (331). After Carrie is seated, "she was keenly aware of all the little things that were done—the little genuflections and attentions in the waiters and head waiter which Americans pay for" (331-32), and she thinks, "Vance was in his element here, as Hurstwood would have been in former days" (333).

Carrie also uses Ames's appearance to try to understand him and to place him in the dramatic context of this scene. When she first sees him in the Vances' apartment, she notes that he is "good-looking" and "well-dressed" (329), and at Sherry's, she watches him closely even as he looks away:

> Ames was looking away rather abstractedly at the crowd and showed an interesting profile to Carrie. His forehead was high, his nose rather large and strong, the chin moderately pleasing. He had a good, wide well-shaped mouth, and his dark brown hair was slightly long and parted on one side. (333)

In fact, both times Carrie acknowledges how "wise" he is, she does so as she notes how he looks, using his appearance to try to understand his thoughts and personality:

> She felt as if she would like to be agreeable to this young man and also there came with it . . . the slightest shade of a

> feeling that he was better educated than she was—that his mind was better. He seemed to look it, and the saving grace in Carrie was that she could understand that people could be wiser. (334)
>
> The red glow on his hair gave it a sandy tinge and put a pink tint in his eye. Carrie noticed all these things, as he leaned towards her, and felt exceedingly young. This man was far ahead of her. He seemed wiser than Hurstwood, saner and wiser than Drouet. (335)

While Ames looks into the distance, separating ideas and context, thoughts and appearances, Carrie, in her reading of Ames and the scene around them, connects appearances and ideas.[9] In the modern urban landscape, seeing effectively is necessary, if not sufficient, for understanding and communicating effectively. While in some cases, seeing means making superficial connections, such as recognizing brand names, in other cases, seeing leads to more tentative, complex conclusions. Here, Carrie's "saving grace" is that she knows that people can be "wiser," an idea that she recognizes largely through her accurate perceptions of appearances.

Carrie's more accurate perceptions during this first meeting are reinforced by Dreiser's extensive use of indirect discourse to elaborate upon them; thus, Carrie, not Ames, seems to be Dreiser's spokesperson in this scene. Other stylistic features indicate this identification. For example, when she first enters the restaurant, Dreiser writes, "The white shirt fronts of the gentlemen, the bright costumes of the ladies, diamonds, jewels, fine feathers, all were exceedingly noticeable" (331). The passive voice of this sentence suggests that the details are noticeable to both Carrie and the narrator, denying any ironic distance between their perspectives. On the other hand, Ames's inability to perceive appearances, including Carrie's appearance, is ironically implied on the way to Sherry's, when Mrs. Vance tells him, "Bob, you'll have to look after Mrs. Wheeler." Bob replies, "I'll try to. . . . 'You won't need much watching, will you?" (329). When they are seated at the restaurant, Carrie is fascinated by Ames's serious demeanor: "to her he seemed to be thinking about strange things" (334). Yet he cannot relate his thinking to the things at hand and merely notes a woman's dress and brooch that Carrie seems to have noticed long before. He asks her,

> "Do you see that brooch?"
>
> "Isn't it large," said Carrie.
>
> "One of the largest clusters of jewels I have ever seen," said Ames.
>
> "It is, isn't it," said Carrie. (334)

After this terse and obvious comment, Ames changes the topic by criticizing the popular writer E. P. Roe (335). While Ames's membership in a literary audience differentiates him from the other men that Carrie meets, he does not relate his opinions to the context at hand and thus cannot make his mental world come alive for Carrie.

Up to this point, then, Ames has affected Carrie more with his appearance than with his words, and Carrie, in fact, has perceived the scene more accurately than he has. Despite her limited use of language, she is able to read and respond to the meaning in the appearances and gestures at hand and to perceive possibilities for herself and others in the "tawdry" show. In other words, Carrie develops by acting in and observing the scene; she identifies the role that each person plays and then considers how to respond by adjusting her own role. Philip Fisher comments on these connections between acting and character:

> Dreiser is the first novelist to base his entire sense of the self on the dramatic possibilities inherent in a dynamic society. Acting involves primarily in Dreiser not deception but practice, not insincerity but installment payments on the worlds of possibility. In *Sister Carrie*, acting is a constant social tactic. (269)

Fisher argues that the "practice" of acting can thus lead to yearning that increases rather than decreases one's developing sense of identity (263-64). Much as Fisher contrasts acting with deception, Orlov, in his Heideggerian reading, contrasts "authentic" with "inauthentic" modes of perceiving and connects the authentic mode with the possibility of becoming (135). This authentic mode of perception allows an actor to learn through appearances, though to do so requires a distinction between people and things. A good actor knows—or learns—to tell the difference between props and people (136). Again, being an actor, not a deceiver, and being an authentic spectator are connected; perceiving possibilities in others is "inextricably bound" with acting in a way that opens up one's own possibilities. In Orlov's terms, acting, then, does not necessarily lead to an objectification of individuals and human relations but can lead to a sympathy towards others and a more authentic sense of identity. Carrie's relationships with Drouet, Hurstwood, and Ames show her acting and perceiving becoming progressively more complex in this way. Though Carrie is quite accurate in perceiving commodities, her unique ability is that in observing the appearance of others she takes account of their possibilities and relates these possibilities to her own process of becoming. For Carrie, emulation is a process of transformation. For example, as she first gets to know Drouet, she brings together his clothing, money, and manners as the

basis for her understanding of Chicago and the possibilities it has for her; "she responds not to him (as an individual), but to what he represents, which her longings make all meaningful" (Orlov 145). As Carrie's acting becomes more "authentic," she will, in fact, respond to Ames as an individual with a unique appearance and unique set of possibilities. For Ames to understand and influence Carrie, he must develop a similar method of perception.

Ames makes his first step in this direction at the end of their first meeting. Even before the dinner party leaves Sherry's for the theater, Carrie puts Ames in an explicitly theatrical context: "He reminded her of scenes she had seen on the stage—the sorrows and sacrifices that always went with she knew not what" (336). In fact, when Ames is presented with the more artistic spectacle of the stage, he begins to examine appearances more thoughtfully in connection with his abstract ideas. This connection allows him to make observations which have a greater effect on Carrie than anything he has previously said: "During the acts Carrie found herself listening to him very attentively. He mentioned things in the play which she most approved of—things which swayed her deeply" (336). Thus, as Ames improves as an observer, he improves in his ability to offer new ideas and possibilities to Carrie. His approval of "good" acting and actors "set Carrie's heart bounding. Ah, if she could only be an actress—a good one. This man was wise—he knew—and he approved of it. If she were a fine actress, such as he would approve of her. She felt that he was good to speak as he had, although it did not concern her at all" (336). In their next meeting, Ames, unlike Hurstwood, will wisely make his comments concern Carrie.

After the play, Carrie is "shocked" by Ames's early departure (336). Yet this abrupt parting emphasizes the initial abstraction with which Ames views Carrie. Though at the conclusion of the chapter Carrie is again rocking in her chair, her desires are not necessarily unchanged. As Pizer argues, there is an ascending structure in the novel as Carrie encounters Drouet, then Hurstwood, then Ames: "They are in hierarchical relationship to the quality of life which they represent and to Carrie's progress upward in understanding and values" (59). Though Pizer focuses on Carrie, Ames undergoes a similarly complex, though less fully described, process as he comes to perceive more like Carrie and recognize greater possibilities in her. This increasingly sympathetic understanding on Ames's part suggests that each person desires in a different way and hence inspires different desires in others—not every person possesses or inspires the same possibilities. Ames's own progression is most obvious in his responses to the theater, which clearly differentiate him from Drouet and Hurstwood in

terms of his desires, his methods of perception, and the way his desires and perceptions develop.

For Ames, the theater represents the possibility of becoming, while for Drouet and Hurstwood it represents the possibility of possessing. Ames considers the aesthetics of the stage in order to influence Carrie's development; Drouet and Hurstwood associate themselves with the spectacle of the stage in order to try to possess her sexually. After a pre-theater dinner which foreshadows the one at Sherry's, Drouet is affected by the spectacle and physically "presse[s]" his response on Carrie as he feels "a keen wave of desire" (77). At the theater with Carrie, Drouet does not comment on the play at all, and, in fact, the well-dressed crowd in the foyer touches both of them more powerfully than does the play itself. In another restaurant after the theater, Drouet again desires Carrie sexually as the theater has aroused physical desires rather than the desire for "something better," so that seeing is associated with touching, not thinking: "He had a way of touching her hand in explanation as if to impress a fact upon her" (78). Though Drouet communicates with Carrie through his appearance and manners and makes observations which connect appearances and the social world, his desires limit his ability to sympathize with Carrie and understand her. Indeed, after their evening at the theater, Drouet sleeps with Carrie for the first time. The contrast between Carrie's and Drouet's ability to perceive sympathetically is most obvious when one of Carrie's neighbors plays the piano. Though the music initially causes her "to cling closer to the things she possessed," as she listens she considers "the things which were best and saddest within the small limit of her experience" and longs for a more expansive sense of "life" (103). Drouet, however, does not have "the poetry in him" to connect immediate perceptions with abstract possibilities and cannot understand the music or Carrie (103).

Similarly, for Hurstwood acting and seeing lead directly to a desire for physical contact and possession while bypassing any deep understanding.[10] Appropriately, in the struggle to possess Carrie, Hurstwood takes advantage of Drouet during two incidents associated with the theater—the second during which she is on stage. Before the two join Drouet to see a play, Carrie places Hurstwood in a theatrical context and closely notes his appearance, just as she later does with Ames. However, Hurstwood's appearance does not direct Carrie towards possibilities for "something wiser" but rather misdirects her with a "delusion" about his place in the world and his intentions of allowing her entrance into the "higher world which she craved" (138). Carrie's higher aspirations become evident in her acting when she literally takes to the stage at Avery Hall to perform in "Under the Gaslight."

Initially Carrie's acting causes Drouet and Hurstwood to feel some sympathy for her, but soon their desires take the form of an explicit competition to possess her. Both even convince themselves that they will marry Carrie to protect her honor. Backstage between acts, Drouet refers to her as "Mrs. Drouet" (186) and resolves that "he would marry her" (192), while Hurstwood thinks at the play's end that "he would have that lovely girl if it took his all. . . . This should be the end of Drouet" (193). After the play, Hurstwood departs abruptly, as Ames does later, though he is left wondering not about the merits of Carrie's performance but rather about the "prize" (194) which Drouet has temporarily won. Both see the possibilities that Carrie offers for gratification but ignore the possibilities that Carrie herself might possess or wish to pursue.

Thus, Drouet and Hurstwood expand Carrie's sense of possibilities, but they are unable themselves to go beyond associating appearances with possession. Ames, in contrast, begins with abstract aesthetic and moral observations, though during his first meeting with Carrie he is unable to connect these ideals to appearances. His observations are more detached than passionately idealistic; he is unlike Carrie, who craves greater possibilities but never ceases to note the details around her. While Carrie is eager to follow Ames to his lofty conclusions, he is unable to base these conclusions on the world that Carrie knows—he is unable to construct his argument in reverse, to move from ideals to things. If Ames is to convince Carrie to think more like him, he must improve as an actor and spectator; he must learn to see more like Carrie, to move from things to ideals.

In considering Ames as a spokesman, critics have focused on whether Ames convinces Carrie to aspire to his ideals. However, given Ames's need to understand Carrie, *sounding* or *plummeting* are better initial terms for measuring Ames as an actor and observer. Such terms are consistent with Dreiser's own views of appearances and the theater, including his much discussed description of Carrie's introduction to the world of the stage: "She had wondered at the greatness of the names upon the billboards, the marvel of the long notices in the papers, the beauty of the dresses upon the stage—the atmosphere of carriages, flowers, refinement. Here was no illusion" (177). While this last sentence, like many, could be attributed to Carrie or to the narrator, Dreiser's autobiography of his early years, *Dawn*, suggests that it may represent his own views. Describing his initial response of going to the theater in Warsaw, Indiana, he connects the apparent illusion of the theater with its deeper origins in reality:

> And where the water rippled, I was the water and the ripple; the trees, the wind, the silence, the light. And beyond

> it again, among the sublime peaks, there was I, my heart and soul enlarged as under the spell of a magic opiate! . . . I was in that land of illusion which seemingly has no relation to reality and yet ever has its roots therein, like those water plants that reaching down through muck and ooze still find something that is neither muck nor ooze. (330)

For Dreiser, the "illusion" of the theater allows him to identify with the things at hand *and* distant, or deeper, ideas, and in doing so enlarges his sense of reality and identity. The theater encompasses the possibility for becoming and connects with the origins of reality as it is; in the theater, beauty is both a promise and an apprehension. Hurstwood senses this theatrical beauty in Carrie, though his concern with his own feelings prevents him from penetrating or analyzing it:

> He [Hurstwood] never attempted to analyze the nature of his affection. . . . He drew near this lily which had sucked its waxen beauty and perfume from below a depth of waters which he had never penetrated, and out of ooze and mold which he could not understand. He drew near because it was waxen and fresh. It lightened his feelings for him. (146)

In this passage, which obviously anticipates *Dawn*, Carrie represents the aesthetic essence of the theater, which presents an "illusion" flowering from reality itself, though no one has yet perceived and understood this essence.

Like Hurstwood, Ames is at first able to understand only half of Carrie's theatrical beauty. While Hurstwood recognizes Carrie's beauty and finds a source of sexual "delight" (185) in possessing her and performing romantically for her, Ames recognizes Carrie's essential ideal and finds a source of thought in performing intellectually for her. Neither is concerned with her as a person; neither can connect appearances with ideals. If Ames is to realize the full possibility of Carrie and her dramatic aesthetic, so that he can in turn sway her deeply with his words, he must first recognize Carrie as a flowering of reality by connecting apparent illusions to the "ooze" of experience from which they spring. In other words, he must perceive appearances more accurately so that he can speak using details as the basis for his abstractions. This is precisely what he does in his second and final meeting with Carrie.

What accounts for this change in Ames? One possibility is suggested by his origins in his fellow Midwesterner Edison. Not only was Edison the individual most responsible for technological advances used to make movies, record music, and distribute electricity, advances which formed important and dramatic props for the urban spectacle,

but, like Ames, he was also destined to become a celebrity despite his apparently no-nonsense disposition. In fact, Edison's ability to maintain and manipulate his appearance as a celebrity became crucial to his ability to pursue and promote his inventions (Wachhorst 43, 89-90). Similarly, Ames becomes more implicated in the world of appearances by becoming a celebrity whose public image is linked to his ideas, a fact emphasized when he is reintroduced into the novel. Speaking to Mrs. Vance just before Ames arrives, Carrie notes that she has seen him in one of the illustrated papers, perhaps even one in which she herself has appeared, and as they meet for the second time, she and Ames joke about their shared celebrity status (479-80). Though Ames is coy about being a celebrity, his fame points to their common experience of making the transition from the production of goods to the production of images: While Carrie has gone from being a factory-girl to a poster-girl, Ames has gone from merely being "connected with the electrical company" (330) to being an inventor celebrated in the newspapers.[11] Like Carrie, his appearance has become a component of his success, while his previous experience allows him to retain a sense of the depth beneath the surface image.

During their second meeting, Carrie shows a greater ability to make Ames focus his attention on her, and he, in turn, shows a greater ability to describe his abstract ideals in the concrete terms of Carrie's physical appearance. This method of immediate perception gives his comments a stronger and more affective force. While for Drouet and Hurstwood seeing Carrie precedes touching and having her, for Ames, seeing Carrie precedes a deeper sympathy between them and a further consideration of the ideals and possibilities that she might pursue. Though Ames is always looking away in his first meeting with Carrie, in the second meeting, their interaction follows a pattern of looking at each other and then looking away—a movement from apprehension to speculation. Ames's greater attention to detail is evident even before he and Carrie meet for the second time. While Carrie "arrayed herself with special care" according to her experiences in the theater, Ames has similarly prepared himself by embellishing his appearance: "Ames was standing, well-formed and clean. He had donned a dress suit for the occasion, and the white shirt front made the line of his face seem brown and strong" (479).[12] In fact, as their second meeting proceeds, his involvement with appearances comes increasingly to characterize his observations as an audience member. Ames first observes Carrie as she has observed him at their first meeting—by looking directly at her: "He was looking at Carrie in a pleased, straightforward way." A moment later, Ames "looked at her as one does at a bouquet of flowers" (480)—a telling description when contrasted with Hurstwood's

inability to appreciate Carrie as a "lily," Dreiser's symbol of the essence of the theater. Ames's new method of seeing more deeply allows him in turn to speak more plainly, a skill which Carrie encourages. The result is that acting leads to a deeper "bond" between them, with Carrie inspiring Ames to a more meaningful understanding even as he inspires her:

> She extended to him that sympathy and attention which he needed to show his mind at its best. At its best it was speculative and idealistic—far above anything which she had as yet conceived, and yet, curiously, he could talk to her. She made him feel as if she understood, and he unconsciously strove to make himself plain. Thus the bond between them was drawn closer than they knew. (481)

Again, acting and perceiving appearances lead to a greater understanding of character, not a greater deception: Carrie acts as if "she understood," and Ames in turn speaks more clearly, in a way that she can really understand.

After this initial exchange, Ames talks to Carrie about literature, particularly Balzac. Much has been made of this rare literary reference in *Sister Carrie*, and critics who see Ames as a spokesman for Dreiser often point to his literary advice, which reflects Dreiser's own reading, to support this view. That Dreiser has Ames emphasize Balzac, along with Hardy, is indeed significant, since, as Erich Auerbach has shown, one of the most distinctive features of Balzac's writing is the stress he places on the connections among appearances, objects, and character (468-84). Significantly, Ames comes to make these connections himself. First, he further distinguishes himself from Drouet and Hurstwood by offering "one of those keen observations which was the result of his comprehension of her nature" (481). When Mrs. Vance interrupts their conversation, Ames dismisses her as one who, unlike Carrie, cannot "feel the pathetic side of life" (482). Thus, Ames establishes a hierarchy of individuals on the basis of character rather than class or clothes, and in doing so opens up different possibilities for Carrie. Then, as the scene progresses, Ames oscillates between appearances and ideals as he comes closer to connecting them. Though Ames recommends Balzac to Carrie and then criticizes him for being too concerned with "love and fortune" (482), these apparently contradictory comments actually reflect a disjuncture between appearances and ideals that he is beginning to bridge.

This becomes more evident from the physical expressions of the characters and the pattern of looking at and looking away from each other which continues to run through this chapter. For example, when Ames initially recommends *Père Goriot*, he is "turning to Carrie."

When he criticizes Balzac for being too materialistic and too concerned with his public impression, he is looking abstractedly away: "Carrie looked at him, but he did not see her" (482). Still speaking abstractedly, Ames goes on to accept a form of desire detached from material things and connected with his own character: "When I was quite young I felt as if I were ill-used because other boys were dressed better than I was, were more sprightly with the girls than I, and I grieved, but now I'm over that. I have found out that everyone is more or less dissatisfied. No one has exactly what his heart wishes" (482-83). These observations, which again distinguish Ames from Drouet and Hurstwood, culminate in a modified view of celebrity, which sees satisfaction coming from unselfish pursuits: "If you have powers, cultivate them. The work of doing it will bring you as much satisfaction as you will ever get. The huzzas of the public don't mean anything. That's the aftermath—you've been paid and satisfied if you are not selfish and greedy long before that reaches you" (483). After first giving much more attention to appearances, he reverts to making abstract pronouncements while missing the appearances around him.

However, from this point on, Ames moves closer and closer to Carrie's method of perception, one which joins seeing what is as well as what might be. This development in Ames's perception is evident in the closer attention that he begins to give Carrie herself. Again, Carrie's "acting"—her attention to communication beyond just language—allows her to influence and attract Ames further, and this mutual responsiveness forges an even stronger understanding between them. As Ames finishes his idealistic speech, Carrie thinks of her own life, and then he "[s]uddenly . . . seemed to have reached the state of her mind without talking" (483). Significantly, he begins "looking at her," and in their mutual gaze he realizes the strength of their bond: "Their eyes had met, and for the first time Ames felt the shock of sympathy, keen and strong" (483). This direct look leads Ames to speak to her "in a speculative way" and to reiterate his advice that she go into more serious drama. These speculations, though, differ from his advice during their first meeting in that he immediately returns to her appearance as the basis for understanding and building a more convincing argument: "He was looking at her directly now—studying her face, as it were. Her large sympathetic eyes and pathetic mouth appealed to him as proofs of his judgement" (483). As he looks at Carrie's face closely, his words are joined more strongly than ever before with his perceptions. In trying to convince Carrie to follow his advice, he says, "I don't suppose you're aware of it, but there is something about your mouth and eyes which would fit you for that sort of work" (483). As Ames is able to see and speak more concretely, Carrie responds to

these word by also bringing together appearances and abstract ideals: "Carrie thrilled to be taken so seriously. Here was praise, keen, strong, analytical. It was what her heart had craved for years. He was dwelling upon her as having qualities worthy of discussion" (484). Again, not all "cravings" are the same: While Drouet's and Hurstwood's selfish attention to appearances has led them to neglect reading Carrie deeply and has pointed her towards external satisfactions for her desires, Ames's appearance, his deep engagement with her appearance, and his "analytical" praise, have "thrilled" her by pointing her desires towards those inner qualities of hers which are "worthy of discussion."

As Ames continues to read Carrie's face, the cycle continues: Carrie's appearance entices Ames to examine her more closely; this examination allows him to make more effective comments; this commentary, in turn, allows Carrie to make her appearance even more suggestive. After Carrie is "thrilled" by his comments about her eyes and mouth, he again comments on them, and Carrie responds with a short comment as "[h]er eyes were shining with suppressed fire." This "suppressed fire" draws Ames's vision even closer. He tells Carrie, "There's a shadow about your eyes, too, which is pathetic. It's in the depth of them, I think" (484). Tellingly, Ames's depth of perception causes Carrie, for once, to look away as her desires extend from the details at hand to larger possibilities for herself: "She looked away, longing to be equal to this feeling written upon her countenance" (484). After another comment, Ames shows some dramatic timing of his own: "He paused and smiled—then looked away. Carrie saw how careful were his words. He was not talking to hear himself talk. This was *thought*, straight from that clean, white brow" (484). The upshot, then, of Ames following Carrie's lead in closely reading appearances is that both come to read similarly. Ames does not stop at abstractions; Carrie does not stop at appearances. Both look *at* details, then *away* to consider the possibilities that they suggest.

The reciprocal pattern of influence continues throughout the scene. Carrie's dramatic presence causes Ames to enlarge his own sensibilities: "He was surprised to find her taking him so seriously. It threw him into the speculative contemplation of the ideal—the something better. To this, the undertone in the song then singing added." Unlike Drouet, Ames responds sensitively to music. Tellingly, he uses his immediate perceptions to enhance his "speculative contemplation" and continues to focus on Carrie as he speaks, "finding her both sweet to look upon and attentive" (484). Indeed, Ames further speculates on "the quality of that thing which your face represents" and finds in it an expression of the yearnings of the world. Yet the apparent grandiosity of his statement ends with his looking not away but *at* Carrie's face.

As she has found "thought" from his "clean straight brow," now he finds his thoughts in her face. A synthesis of arousal and thought is again produced from their mutual gaze: "He stopped and looked at Carrie, but only in an intellectual way. Her eyes were turned steadily toward his face and her lips were apart. She was colorful and dainty—the perfect Carrie in mind and body, because her mind was aroused" (485). This realization of "the perfect Carrie" is Ames's unique accomplishment, one that comes from having learned how to read Carrie correctly.[13]

During his speech, Ames argues for a new kind of celebrity as a "medium" of the masses in service to "the many," and again these abstract aspirations are tied to appearances: "You can't remain tender and sympathetic, and desire to serve the world, without having it show in your face and art" (486).[14] As he finishes, "Carrie gazed on into his eyes" and "[h]er little hands were folded in her lap, her lips sweetly parted" (486). Again, Carrie's ability to act and Ames's new methods of reading allow him to modify the way he communicates. As an actor, he exhibits a new rhetorical skill, that of observing his audience and considering its potential response: " 'Well,' he said, seeing her so interested, 'I didn't mean to read you a lecture' " (486). In weighing the altruism of Ames's "lecture," Carrie typically uses his appearance and the values of the stage as the basis for judgment:

> She was thinking of the solution being offered her. Not money—he did not need that. Not clothes—how far was he from their pretension. Not applause—not even that—but goodness—labor for others.
>
> Curiously, all he said appealed to her as absolutely true. Never had she seen such a man as this. He was not handsome, as dandies figure it. Most stage people would have though him queer. But oh, she was weary of stage people. (486)

As they part, Ames begins again to seem "reserved and far away" (486), though after "[h]e looked at her calmly," he gets "a keen impression of her mental state." As he looks at her, his mental sympathy becomes complex; like Carrie, he connects emotions, thoughts, ethics, and aesthetics by carefully observing appearances and speculating on possibilities:

> He looked after her sympathetically. What Mrs. Vance had told him about her husband's having disappeared, together with all he felt concerning the moral status of certain types of actresses, fled. There was something exceedingly human and unaffected about this woman—a something which craved neither money nor praise. He followed to the door—wide awake to her beauty. (487)

Ames reveals his previous morality here, one which deemed divorced or abandoned women and certain actresses as being morally suspect. His morality is, from all indications, similar to that of many of Dreiser's contemporary readers. While many, including Dreiser, have blamed the initial commercial failure of *Sister Carrie* on this morality, Corkin blames its failure on "the fact that American readers were not yet used to making the intellectual leaps the book required of them" in joining appearances and character. Ames finally does join them. In coming to see Carrie differently, he has come to think of her differently as well. While Carrie finds something "absolutely true" and uniquely possible in this man who is unlike any other she has seen, Ames, in learning to see Carrie in a new way, finds a new kind of truth, "something exceedingly human and unaffected." Like Carrie, he has found the possibility for higher ideals right before his eyes.

Notes

1. For a consideration of Ames as he appeared in the 1900 edition and in the manuscript that forms the basis of the University of Pennsylvania edition, see Donald Pizer, *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser*, 63 ff, and Stephen C. Brennan, "The Two Endings of *Sister Carrie*." I would like to thank Elizabeth Renker for her help with an early draft of this essay.

2. Obviously, all of the critics writing before 1981, including Michaels, based their readings on the original Doubleday, Page edition, though they sometimes consulted additional draft material. Interestingly, since 1981, most critics have continued to use the Doubleday edition. Though my own analysis is based on the University of Pennsylvania edition, of all the critics considered in this essay, only Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr. uses it. As my argument makes clear, I find the labeling of Ames as a "spokesman" limiting, whatever edition is considered, though the "unexpurgated" edition's additional material on Ames better helps to point to other possibilities of reading his character and significance when these limits are surpassed.

3. Kevin R. McNamara comments on this change: "Bob Ames has been getting bad press recently and I want to correct it. . . . The electrical engineer in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* who was for an earlier generation of critics like Ellen Moers an 'intellectual midwesterner brought on near the novel's end to express Dreiser's own opinions,' particularly opinions that suggest the 'shallow[ness]' of the other characters' levels of 'metropolitan success,' is now something of a prude, while Carrie, not Ames, is said to tell us the truth about the market" (217). However, Ames continues to be consistently labeled a "spokesman." Just as Moers describes Ames as a spokesman for art's ability to transcend "simple," classbound origins (*Two Dreisers* 109), Hussman writes, "Ames appears to function as the author's spokesman in offering Carrie some perspective on her pursuits and in pointing the way to what he thinks may be her higher calling (24), though "[t]he two scenes involving Ames demonstrate in graphic detail the difficulty Dreiser faced in constructing a fictional

spokesman for his ideas. Strikingly, very little has been written by critics over the years about Ames . . . even though it can be justly said that his characterization is the key to understanding the novel and Dreiser at the time that he wrote it" (29). Even critics who do not deem Ames a failure use the same terms. Paul A. Orlov writes, "As soon as Carrie meets Ames through her New York neighbor, Mrs. Vance, it is evident that he is meant to be a spokesman for Dreiser—a character/commentator valuably contributing to the novel's illumination of its heroine's problematic pursuit" (159). Michaels and the critics following him describe Ames in the same way. For example, Rachel Bowlby, like Michaels, emphasizes the anachronistic, Howellsian Ames whom Dreiser first identifies with and then leaves behind for an Ames who embraces consumer capitalism (61).

4. Amy Kaplan's influential reading of Dreiser supports this connection between Dreiser and Edison. She shows that the scientists and businessmen whom Dreiser interviewed during his days as a journalist provided him with a model of "genius" with which to imagine his role as a writer in society (114-15). As McNamara notes, Dreiser's understanding of social science would have encouraged such a connection between scientist and artist (221).

5. Pizer also considers how this ability to identify with different characters lends a powerful, tragic quality to many of Dreiser's novels (24-25).

6. Interestingly, Blanche H. Gelfant compares Carrie to writers and readers in the way that she makes meaning from the crude material of reality: "Carrie sees what is not there except in imagination, illusion, or desire, and she projects 'the perfect joy' she cannot see upon material things readily visible to the eye. In this respect, she is not unlike the writer of a literary text, who has imbued its material objects with symbolic meanings, or the reader of the text, who learns to interpret its symbolic codes" (181).

7. For an extended reading of the importance of acting and understanding objects in relation to identity, see Philip Fisher's "*Sister Carrie* and the Life History of Objects."

8. In fact, Pizer, in elaborating on Ames's failure as a spokesman, also comments on his failure in perception (69). My argument, obviously, does not find Ames to be a failure but suggests that he develops in these two complementary roles.

9. See Orlov 145, for an interesting elaboration of this argument.

10. See Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* 119-20.

11. Wachhorst notes that this transformation is so compelling because it parallels the transformation in the nation itself: "[B]y the 1920s, when the urban population officially exceeded the rural and consumption was a greater goal than production, Edison himself had become primarily an item to be consumed by readers of the popular press, radio listeners, and visitors at public events" (8).

12. Critics like Hussman who assume that idealism is incompatible with physical appearances find Ames's attention to detail and changing views of Balzac to be "inconsistencies" rather than marks of character development (Hussman 25-26). I am arguing that in fact idealism and appearances are not irreconcilable but must be reconciled in practice, as Ames does, if one is to develop the mode of perception necessary to read Carrie and her world accurately.

13. Again, Ames here stands in contrast to Hurstwood. After Carrie has appeared in Avery Hall, all Hurstwood sees in her face are possibilities for himself: "He looked at her pretty face and new feeling came to him. . . . He realized what a delight she would be to him, how she would console him for all the distresses and wearinesses of a complex home situation—how his life would be brightened if she were his own" (205).

14. Interestingly, Edison's celebrity status assumed precisely this quality: "Edison's insistence on utility as a criteria for invention became the root of a new aspect in his image which appeared in the years after World War I: the idea of service to the nation and mankind" (Wachhorst 158).

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The Czech Reception of *Sister Carrie*

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The reception of any literary work is influenced not only by its intrinsic literary value but also by the time when it was published and the contemporary social situation, and the Czech reception of *Sister Carrie* confirms this rule. The reception varied with changes in the country's political climate and to some extent also with the quality of the translations.

The belated introduction of Dreiser's work to Czech readers began after World War I, much later than was the case with another significant naturalist, Upton Sinclair. *Sister Carrie* was published for the first time in Czechoslovakia in 1931, over three decades after its original publication in the USA, in two volumes, under the title *Sestra Carrie* (translated by Jaroslav Kraus and Karel Kraus).[1] In the same year, his novel *Jennie Gerhardt* appeared in Czech translation, while his best-received novel in Czechoslovakia, *An American Tragedy*, had become available to the Czech public in 1928, only three years after its publication in English.

It should be noted that publication of Dreiser's novels in Czech translation was preceded by the author's visit to Czechoslovakia in the mid-twenties, which contributed to his immense popularity in the country. Perhaps his partially Czech ancestry on his mother's side (his grandmother was born in Moravia, a region between Bohemia and Slovakia) contributed to his interest in the society and culture of Czechoslovakia, and during his visit he even met the first Czechoslovak President, T. G. Masaryk, a great national politician and thinker to whom he paid his deep respects. An interview with Theodore Dreiser by Jarmila Fastrová, published in *Rozpravy Aventina* in 1926,[2] prepared the ground for the favorable reception of his books among Czech readers and made him known to the reading public before his first novels were even published in Czech translation.

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It is not coincidence that, except for *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser's major novels were first published in Czechoslovakia in the thirties. In 1931 several Czech literary periodicals, including the prestigious *Literární noviny*, *Rozpravy Aventina*, and the left-wing *Tvorba*, advertised the gradual publication of a cheap and popular edition of Dreiser's works by the publishing house Čin (Action). Dreiser's fiction perfectly fitted the mood of Czech readers during the Depression and was well suited to the atmosphere of growing social awareness. His interest in the problems of the working class particularly appealed to people who had been radicalized by the economic crisis and who asserted left-wing views. Dreiser's works found a Czech readership in time of high unemployment, inflation, and poverty. These circumstances explain why his novels aroused so much attention in Czechoslovakia at that time. *Sister Carrie* was no exception.

The novel became available to Czech readers just a few months before the biggest and most serious social conflict in Czechoslovakia's economic crisis, a huge strike by miners and other workers in the North Bohemian mining region in March and April 1932. During the Most Strike (named after the coal-mining town of Most), 25,000 workers struck against low wages and massive dismissals of employees. The Depression reached its climax in this year; the strike itself resulted in bloodshed and increased tension between workers, supported by the left-wing intelligentsia, and extreme right-wingers. The political situation was complicated by the growing nationalism that directly threatened the foundations of Czechoslovakia's parliamentary democracy. In 1933 unemployment increased rapidly and reached a level of more than one million people. No wonder that in this climate the passages in *Sister Carrie* about the strike by motormen, conductors, and other employees on the trolley lines in Brooklyn sounded very familiar to Czech readers.

However, the reception of this novel reflected the highly polarized political scene in 1930s Czechoslovakia. The novel received its most enthusiastic critical review in *Tvorba*, a weekly for literature, politics, and art that generally expressed the views of the Czech left-wing intelligentsia. On October 22, 1931, *Tvorba* published an article by Karel Kolařík entitled "Theodore Dreiser the Communist."[3] In rather propagandistic language Kolařík praises the novel and describes Dreiser as "the Balzac of the era of the growth, climax and collapse of American capitalism" (668). He points out the pioneering message of *Sister Carrie* and claims that this novel is a landmark in the development of American literature, bringing an end to "the saccharine artificiality of the Howellses" and marking "the arrival of pure naturalism" (668). According to Kolařík, only the crisis of capitalism helped

Dreiser, like Romain Rolland, find his mission in overt support for socialism. At the end of the article Kolařík quotes *The Daily Worker* (the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USA) and the Communist cultural monthly *New Masses*, both of which attempted to evaluate Dreiser and his work.

On the other hand, *Sister Carrie* was totally ignored by right-wing periodicals. *Šaldův zápisník* is a good example of this critical silence. This periodical was edited by the outstanding Czech literary critic F. X. Šalda, who rejected Marxist philosophy and who, in his reviews, always emphasized the aesthetic quality of literary works. Social novels were not close to his heart, and thus it is no surprise that his periodical did not register the publication of Dreiser's novel at all. Moreover, Šalda especially favored French literature, which tended to dominate the content of his reviews to the detriment of other literatures, including American writing.

In comparison with *Tvorba*, more sophisticated and balanced views of Dreiser's writing were presented in *Rozpravy Aventina*, then a highly influential weekly for literature, art, and criticism. In the issue of June 9, 1932, a joint review of both *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* appeared.[4] Its author, Bohumil Novák, hidden behind the abbreviation Nk, was basically very favorable to both novels in his tone. He appreciated Dreiser's courage in depicting serious problems in American society, his critical voice with its uncompromising analysis of American life, and his close observation of reality. In the review Dreiser is described as "a poet observing real life" (312), and his matter-of-factness is considered to be a great advantage, preventing him from presenting mere caricatures. Thus, in Novák's view, Dreiser ranks above Sinclair Lewis. Yet the reviewer also draws attention to the formal conventionality of Dreiser's prose. He mentions a lack of novelty in the writer's sentences and a rather traditional and monotonous approach to the material. According to Novák, Dreiser follows the "conventional and well-trodden paths of the European realist novel" (312).

A more critical view of Dreiser's work was offered in *Rozpravy Aventina* by Otakar Vočadlo, one of the most prominent Czech Anglicists of that time and the country's first academic Americanist. Vočadlo's article, simply entitled "Theodore Dreiser,"[5] appeared in September 1931 to mark the occasion of Dreiser's sixtieth birthday and attempted to present a synthetic view of the novelist's fiction. Though Vočadlo recognizes the candor and dramatic features of Dreiser's prose, he also admits its central paradox: even though Dreiser is a great writer, his writing in English is rather clumsy. Dreiser indulges in redundant description and contemplation and suffers from a lack of

feeling for economical expression. Vočadlo extends the list of Dreiser's drawbacks to include his tendency to use clichés and stereotypes, his painful lack of subtlety, and his rather unconvincing characterization of the upper classes. In spite of all these formal weaknesses, however, Vočadlo esteems Dreiser's work. Dreiser is an "energetic pioneer of naturalism" who paved the way for Sherwood Anderson and the other authors of the younger generation (11). Unlike Novák, however, Vočadlo values Sinclair Lewis higher than Dreiser.

It is worth noting that Vočadlo's opinions were very influential in the reception of American authors in Czechoslovakia because he pioneered the academic study of American literature in this country. Vočadlo taught British and American literature at Comenius University in Bratislava and at Charles University in Prague, where he educated the new generation of Anglicists and Americanists in the thirties (his academic career was interrupted by the war, during which he was imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps). He vehemently popularized British and American literature in the Czech press and wrote special studies for several distinguished literary periodicals. He also contributed to *Otto's Encyclopedia of the New Age*, writing the entries concerning British and American writers and their works. As the editor of the "Anglo-American Library" series, he directly influenced the formation of a canon of American literature in Czechoslovakia. Though his expertise was particularly in British literature, he dutifully followed the American literary scene and deepened his knowledge of American literature during his visits to the United States.

Vočadlo's pioneering book *Contemporary Literature of the United States*, published in Prague in 1934,[6] greatly stimulated the study of American literature in Czechoslovakia. It was the first synthetic account of American literature published in this country, and its value is in no way diminished by the fact that its focus was limited to the period between 1913 (the beginning of Woodrow Wilson's presidency) and the Great Depression. The study includes a seven-page essay on Theodore Dreiser placing his work in a broader American and international literary context. Although he compares Dreiser favorably to Carl Sandburg in his depiction of the modern city, Vočadlo concludes that, alongside the modernism of Joyce, Lawrence, and Hemingway, Dreiser's daring naturalism in *Sister Carrie*, *The Titan*, and *The "Genius*" looks very timid and naïve and that it is difficult to understand why these novels provoked so much disapproval at the time of their original publication. Vočadlo sees Dreiser's novels as a series of missed opportunities: Dreiser could have become one of the greatest masters of the American novel if only his prose had not been burdened with so many flaws. In *Sister Carrie*, Vočadlo finds stylistic inapti-

tude, elephantine and wearisome descriptions, and sometimes rather unconvincing psychological characterization; his judgements are thus in line with those of British and American critics, notably William Lyon Phelps, Stuart P. Sherman, Van Wyck Brooks, and even Dreiser's great supporter H. L. Mencken. Vočadlo's attitude to Dreiser might have been influenced by his antipathy towards Germans, for he attributed Dreiser's stylistic flaws to his German background and interpreted Dreiser's belief in Darwinist theory to be a typical product of German thinking. In his view Dreiser is impressed by usurpers and predatory beasts, and his characters are not divided into the good and bad but rather into the strong and weak. On the other hand, this remarkable Czech Americanist appreciates Dreiser's effort at objectivity without moralizing and his detached observation of human desires and passions.

Vočadlo is right when, in his article in *Rozpravy Aventina*, he says that Dreiser's work actually benefits if it is read in a good translation. And though the first Czech translation is at times inaccurate, it does veil some obvious stylistic faults. Perhaps for this reason, together with the ideological bias in the left-wing press, Czech criticism of Dreiser's formal and stylistic lapses tended to be muted. The Czech translator Aloys Skoumal was a rare exception when, in the January 1931 issue of *Rozpravy Aventina*, he severely attacked Dreiser for his formal defects and condemned the author's best-received novel in Czechoslovakia, *An American Tragedy*. He described this novel as "a giant epopee of boredom" entirely lacking in composition and refused to treat it as a work of art. The only positive aspect he found in the novel was its competent translation.[7] Obviously, his rejection of this novel was too indiscriminate.

It has often been said that it took America's taste one generation to catch up with Dreiser. The Czech reception of his *Sister Carrie* in the thirties shows that there is some truth to this statement. While part of the American reading public felt affronted by Dreiser's sympathetic treatment of Carrie, and many a critic was disturbed by the fact that her "immoral" actions went unpunished, Czech objections to Dreiser were predominantly on political rather than moral grounds. One wonders what the Czech critical reaction would have been if *Sister Carrie* had been published in Czech thirty years earlier.

After World War II it became evident that *Sister Carrie* needed a new translation that would replace the rather old-fashioned language of the existing one. In 1957 a new Czech translation by Alena Jindrová-Špilarová and Miroslav Jindra appeared under the slightly altered title of *Sestřička Carrie*.[8] The new title was more apt because the Czech diminutive "sestřička," derived from the neutral word "sestra" by the

suffix "-ička**,"** expresses a more emotional attitude of the narrator towards the protagonist. By this morphologic means Czech language expresses smallness, which is congruent with the early helpless Carrie lost in the big city, but also a certain degree of irony. In Czech the word "sestřička" suggests innocence, virtue, and naiveté. In the context of the second part of the novel, where Carrie "rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue"[9] and ceases to be an insignificant and vulnerable creature in the big city, the title gains an ironic tone. After she becomes an actress, she loses her innocence and is too visible and self-reliant to be simply anonymous. In fact, the irony inherent in the title is also implied by Dreiser himself. Why did he call his novel *Sister Carrie*? Considering the text itself, the familial designation cannot be justified by the narrative point of view, because it is not Carrie's sibling who is the narrator. Moreover, Carrie's sister Minnie is a minor character with whom the author soon dispenses. However, both in English and in Czech the word "sister" carries another meaning, signifying a nun or a member of certain female religious orders. And as we know, Dreiser depicts Carrie as a woman whose behavior can be hardly regarded as virtuous or nunnish.

Vočadlo's point about how translation "improves" the novel can be applied particularly to the new translation of *Sister Carrie*. The translators have largely (though not completely) removed the rather pathetic and sometimes clumsy titles of individual chapters. Unlike their predecessors, they do not feel bound by the sentence structure of the English original and manage to avoid a slavish approach to it. Accordingly, their translation is more artistic. The diction is simpler and more economical, the sentences clearer and more accurate. And most importantly more natural sounding contemporary Czech has replaced the partly archaic language of the novel's 1930s translation. *Sister Carrie* is now known to the Czech audience in its second, superior translation, while the first one has fallen into oblivion.

On the other hand, the second translation was not reviewed in the Czech media to the same extent as the first one. Unfortunately, Dreiser's work was mostly exploited for cheap propaganda purposes by the Czech Communist press. For example, the journalist František Větrovský, in his 1957 article "The Other America" in *Mladá fronta*, leaves no doubt as to what he means by "the other America" when he applauds Dreiser's membership in the Communist Party of the USA.[10] He suggests that, just before his death in 1945, Dreiser found a truly beautiful America among American Communists. What a kind of American beauty!

The second edition of the new Czech translation of *Sister Carrie* came out in 1979.[11] It is accompanied by translator Alena Jindrová-

Špilarová's afterword, which is an attempt to evaluate Dreiser's first novel and his other works more objectively than did the Communist press. She claims that in its style *Sister Carrie* bears traces of both the 19th and 20th centuries. While the opening sections of the novel, the author's personal commentaries, and his manner of addressing the reader echo the influence of the 19th century, particularly that of Honoré de Balzac, the lively dramatic passages and dialogues are quite modern. Jindrová-Špilarová emphasizes the historic authenticity of Dreiser's message and his emphasis on the depiction of class differences. She also reminds the reader of the author's social criticism and the detailed accuracy of his descriptions and concludes that, even eighty years after its first publication, *Sister Carrie* still has the power to capture its readers.

What then is the prevailing view of Theodore Dreiser in the Czech Republic after 1989, when the totalitarian regime collapsed and revolutionary changes swept across the entire political and economic system? The truth is that the author of *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy* has gone out of fashion. Czech publishing houses now prefer a different type of writer. To some extent this is understandable. Those publishers who do not simply aim for commercial success, and insist on publishing serious literature, are currently trying to fill out the gaps in the availability of American fiction left from the Communist years. They are discovering the postmodern novel and, for Czech readers, new and interesting names from the US literary world such as John Barth, William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, and Donald Barthelme**.** They are also catching up with the backlog in introducing those writers who were completely or at least partly forbidden to be published in Communist Czechoslovakia for ideological reasons**—**Jerzy Kosinski, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Vladimir Nabokov, Henry Miller, and Charles Bukowski.

Does this mean that Theodore Dreiser is hopelessly outdated for Czech readers? In my view many of the social problems Dreiser wrote about are still topical in contemporary Czech society. In this period of transition from one social system to another, or rather in the restoration of the capitalist system, Czech society in some respects faces problems very similar to those of Dreiser's era. I do not claim that they are identical, but the stories of Dreiser's heroes, such as Clyde Griffiths and Carrie Meeber, can still strike a chord among Czech readers. Though Dreiser is known in this country mainly as the author of *An American Tragedy* (the latest edition of this novel was published in the Czech Republic in 1996), even one hundred years after its publication in the USA and seventy years after its first translation into Czech, *Sister Carrie* still has a Czech audience. This is an honor to its author and con-

firms the fact that Dreiser remains an important part of the American literary canon.

Notes

1. Theodore Dreiser, *Sestra Carrie*, trans. Jaroslav Kraus and Karel Kraus (Praha: Čin [Románová knihovna Proud, sv. 48], 1931).

2. Jarmila Fastrová, "Rozhovor s Theodorem Dreiserem," *Rozpravy Aventina* 2.1 (1926-27): 1-2.

3. Karel Kolařík, "Komunista Theodor Dreiser," *Tvorba* 22 October 1931: 668-669.

4. Nk, "Theodore Dreiser: Sestra Carrie: Dva díly. Román o Jeny Gerhardtové," *Rozpravy Aventina* 9 June 1932: 312.

5. Otakar Vočadlo, "Theodore Dreiser," *Rozpravy Aventina* 24 September 1931: 11.

6. Otakar Vočadlo, *Současná literatura Spojených států. Od zvolení presidenta Wilsona po velkou hospodářskou krisi* (Praha: Jan Laichter, 1934).

7. Aloys Skoumal, "Th. Dreiser: Americká tragedie, Kniha I. II." *Rozpravy Aventina* 15 January 1931: 204.

8. Theodore Dreiser, *Sestřička Carrie*, trans. Alena Jindrová-Špilarová and Miroslav Jindra (Praha: SNKLHU [Knihovna klasiků], 1957).

9. Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 4.

10. František Větrovský, "Ta druhá Amerika. Na pomoc čtenářským kroužkům Fučíkova odznaku," *Mladá fronta* 13 March 1957: 3.

11. Theodore Dreiser, *Sestřička Carrie*, trans. Alena Jindrová-Špilarová and Miroslav Jindra (Praha: Odeon, 1979).

Reviews

Sister Carrie, by Theodore Dreiser. Special Centennial Edition. Introduction by Richard Lingeman. New York: Signet Classics, 2000. 512 pp. Paper, $5.95.

An American Tragedy, by Theodore Dreiser. Introduction by Richard Lingeman. New York: Signet Classics, 2000. 880 pp. Paper, $9.95.

Richard Lingeman has provided the introductions to two new imprints of Dreiser novels, the Signet Classics Special Centennial Edition of *Sister Carrie* and the same publisher's *An American Tragedy.* Both paperbacks are handsomely bound, the *Carrie* cover featuring John Sloan's 1912 painting *A Window on the Street* and *Tragedy's* a 1999 Henry Le Basque picture entitled *En Barque sur La Marne.* The cover art in each case has been perceptively chosen. *A Window on the Street* presents a young woman resting her arms against a pillow placed on her window sill and gazing with palpable discontent at the scene outside. *En Barque sur La Marne* is done in neo-impressionist style, and it foregrounds a visibly tense woman staring from the front of a rowboat at a rower unseen by the painting's viewer. Both editions appear to be bound for maximum durability, making them the most attractive of the paperback versions of these novels available.

Lingeman's introduction to *Sister Carrie* finds it as "fresh and alive as the day it was written" and its author amazingly accomplished for a twenty-nine-year-o1d with a spotty education. As befits his status as Dreiser's definitive biographer, Lingeman concentrates on the facts surrounding the novel's inspiration and composition as well as its later fate. A short summary of the plot is also provided. Since this *Carrie* is billed as an exclusive centennial production, it reprints the original Doubleday text and, understandably, Lingeman makes no mention of the 1981 Pennsylvania edition in his introduction. Less defensible is his decision to list in his selected bibliography no book or journal article more recent than 1972, not even his own two-volume biography from the nineties. This curious call might lead the uninitiated to the

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emphatically erroneous conclusion that Dreiser and his first novel have fallen into complete neglect over the past thirty years.

In the new Signet *Tragedy*, Lingeman rightly judges Dreiser's magnum opus "one of the most important American novels of the twentieth century." He puts the work in the clarifying context of the novelist's career during the twenties and underscores the importance of his discovering Freud for describing Clyde's anxiety and moral struggle. Lingeman is especially enlightening in his explanation of the way Dreiser uses doubles from opposite social classes to make his point that a person's fate is bound up with accidents of his birth. He also analyzes Dreiser's style in the novel, crediting it with a cumulative effect like that of a tidal wave. As in his introduction to the new Signet *Sister Carrie,* he whets the potential reader's appetite with a tight plot summary.

The Dreiser *aficionado* will appreciate these two paperbacks from Signet with their intelligent introductions by Lingeman. But, looking them over, I found myself most envying the experience of the reader just encountering Dreiser through these welcoming editions.

—Lawrence E. Hussman, Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Sklodowskiej
Lublin, Poland

News & Notes

REMINDER: The deadline for the second **Annual Dreiser Essay Prize** competition is Aug. 1, 2001. The contest, which is open to graduate students and untenured assistant professors, awards a cash prize of $250 for the best essay submitted on any aspect of Dreiser's work and/or life. The winning essay will also appear in *Dreiser Studies*. Essays should follow MLA style, and applicants should not identify themselves on the essay but should instead provide their names, addresses (including email address), and "Dreiser Essay Prize Competition" on a separate cover page. Submit *three* copies to:

Stephen Brennan, Chair
Dreiser Essay Prize Committee
Department of English
Louisiana State University in Shreveport
Shreveport, LA 71115
email: iroki2@aol.com

NEW BOOKS: *Theodore Dreiser and American Culture: New Readings*, edited by Yoshinobu Hakutani, was published by the University of Delaware Press in 2000. Hakutani's edition of Dreiser's essays, *Art, Music, and Literature, 1897-1902* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), was published in March. Both books will be reviewed in a future issue.

NEW WEB SOURCE: The University of Pennsylvania's **DreiserWebSource** is now available. The web site includes essays by Donald Pizer ("Dreiser's Critical Reputation"), Thomas P. Riggio ("Biography of Theodore Dreiser"), Clare Eby ("Cultural and Historical Contexts for *Sister Carrie*"), and James L. W. West III ("The Composition and Publication of *Sister Carrie*"), as well as a generous helping of other materials for understanding *Sister Carrie* and Dreiser, including a virtual exhibition of the novel and its sources by Nancy Shawcross, facsimiles of the 1900 typescript and the Doubleday, Page edition of the novel, photographs in the Dreiser Collection, and even a clip of a film of Dreiser. See http://www.library.upenn.edu/special/dreiser/.

DREISER AT ALA: The Dreiser Society will sponsor the following panels at the American Literature Association meeting in Cambridge, MA, on May 24-27, 2001:

I. DREISER AND OTHER WRITERS

Chair: Renate von Bardeleben, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz (Germany)

1. "Dreiser, Michael Gold, and the Proletarian in *An American Tragedy*," Laura Hapke, Pace University
2. "Charles Fort and Theodore Dreiser: The Underlying Oneness," Roark Mulligan, Christopher Newport University
3. "Dreiser and the Continentalist Ambitions and Fears of Frederick Philip Grove," Barbara S. Buchenau, Georgia-Augusta University, Goettingen (Germany)

II. DREISER, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY

Chair: Paul A. Orlov, Pennsylvania State University, Delaware County Campus

1. "Victim No More: The Emergence of Dreiser's New Woman in 'Marriage-For One,'" Donna Packer-Kinlaw, University of North Carolina at Wilmington
2. "The X'd Out Files of *The 'Genius,'*" Clare Eby, University of Connecticut
3. "And I Must Not Judge Her Too Harshly: A Feminist Reading of Dreiser's *A Gallery of Women*," Amy St. Jean, Monroe Community College (Rochester, New York)

***DREISER STUDIES* ON-LINE:** The journal will be available on-line after July 1, in full-text form, in the EBSCO database Academic Search Premiere, accessible through many libraries. The issues available on-line are from volume 28 (Spring 1997) to the present.

CORRECTION: The Dreiser Society brochure that was recently distributed at the *Sister Carrie* Centenary inadvertently omitted the name of Miriam Gogol as Book Review Editor for *Dreiser Studies* and the names of Gogol and Frederic E. Rusch as co-founders of the Society. The Society apologizes for the omission and has reprinted the brochure.

Contributors

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Stanislav Kolář teaches American literature, American studies, and literary theory in the Department of English and American Studies of the University of Ostrava, Czech Republic. He has published *Evropské kořeny americké židovské literatury* (*European Roots of Jewish-American Literature*, Ostrava 1998), essays in various volumes, and numerous reviews of American writers in Czech periodicals. He is also the author of a collection of his own poetry, *Tenisový sen* (*Tennis Dream*, Ostrava 1988). During 2000 he was a Fulbright scholar at the University of California at Berkeley.

Carol A. Nathanson is Associate Professor of Art History at Wright State University. She has written catalogue texts for several exhibitions, including "The Expressive Fauvism of Anne Estelle Rice," held in 1997 at the Hollis Taggart Galleries in New York. Currently she is completing a monograph on Rice. Her articles have appeared in *The Cleveland Museum of Art Bulletin*, *The American Art Journal*, *The Archives of American Art Journal*, and *Woman's Art Journal*.